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General Assembly

Seventy-third session

Official Records

7th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 September 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Ms. Espinosa Garcés. . . . . (Ecuador)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Korneliou (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Address by Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: The General Assembly is a representation of humankind in its fullness. I therefore congratulate the President of the General Assembly. Her ascendance to this seat reminds us that there are no minorities in the Organization, and we are proud to see the Assembly led by a woman of her repute and intellectual prowess. Once again, I convey to her my congratulations.

Ten days ago, Africa lost a Malawian who was our first Ambassador to the General Assembly. David Rubadiri represented the conscience of the African continent and a pan-African poet who was adopted by East Africa as its son. One month ago, the world lost an African who was the first Secretary-General of the United Nations from black Africa. Kofi Annan was an African and an inspiring spirit of the world. He was a voice of peace, a voice for the voiceless and the conscience and moral arbiter of the world. He decisively carried forward the flag of peace amid turmoil when some of us were busy declaring war on peace.

Today I stand to urge the Assembly to raise high that flag of peace for which my brother Kofi Annan stood. I urge the Assembly to rise and march forward in that spirit of defending peace. Peace is a universal desire. We all desire peace. It must be diligently sought by us all. Peace is precious. Peace is delicate. It must be jealously guarded by us all. We cannot sit here as a proud Assembly while out there human communities are being driven from their homes, forced to abandon their countries and condemned to unknown destinies of homeless survival. Every human needs a home. We cannot be proud as members of humankind when out there innocent children, voiceless men and vulnerable women are suffering and being killed. Every life is precious. History will measure our global leadership and the legacy of the Organization on the scales of how we defend the defenceless, feed the hungry and empower the weak. History will judge our generation on how we defend human life and protect this endangered planet. It is therefore our shared responsibility to seek peace in all its forms, defend peace and reach out to reason with those who declare war on peace.

The relevance of the Organization rests on our ability to satisfy the needs of people across the

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world. That includes Africa, as I will argue in my conclusion. Let us never doubt that the pursuit of shared responsibility implies collective inclusion. Every nation is important, and we all have something to offer. That is why I began my address by reminding the Assembly that there are no minorities here. There are no small nations. There are only nations in the United Nations. Of course, let us admit that there will always be economic inequality among nations and, yes, we all have something to offer to humankind. But those with more resources and power must step up and offer more. Let us remember that power is not status; power is responsibility. Leadership is not prestige; leadership is responsibility. We must define global leadership in terms of global responsibility.

We are prepared to fulfil our responsibility and obligations in the global community. Malawi remains committed to the ideals of the United Nations. Malawi subscribes to the values of democratic governance, peace and security. We remain committed to participating in efforts to maintain international peace and security. Malawi remains committed to promoting and protecting human rights. We remain committed to participating in international cooperation to resolve the challenges that face human societies.

Malawi acknowledges the sacrifices being made by the Blue Helmets. The composition of the Blue Helmets demonstrates the commitment of the United Nations to the principle of including nations of all regions. We are proud to be an active contributor to peacekeeping operations across the world. For us, defending peace is a precious sacrifice. Malawi has served in peacekeeping missions in Darfur, Lesotho and Côte d'Ivoire. As I speak, we are part of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In our pursuit to promote peace, justice and effective institutions, I would like to announce that in 2019 a high-level political forum on Sustainable Development Goal 16 will convene in Malawi. I welcome the opportunity and honour of hosting the forum. I believe that the event will be a significant catalyst to our resolve to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16.

Malawi supports the determination of the United Nations to galvanize international cooperation in promoting socioeconomic development. We are committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We support the priorities of the United Nations in eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions. The priorities of the United Nations are also Malawi's priorities, and we will not relent until we have accomplished the full hierarchy of our priorities.

We are proud of our efforts and achievements in maternal health, girls' education, youth empowerment and gender equality. However, the plight of refugees and migrants is a concern for the people of Malawi. As Malawians, we believe that refugees are part of our human family. We believe in our collective responsibility to ensure refugees' protection, safety and access to refuge. As a result, Malawi has been hosting refugees for decades.

I would also like to report that this year Malawi received a high-level delegation from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We are actively part of the initiative to develop a comprehensive refugee response framework, which was agreed by States Members. We have developed the concept for the framework that is to be rolled out in Malawi within our national development strategy and our cooperation agreement with the United Nations.

On another matter, Malawi is both a victim and a fighter of climate change. The consequences of climate change are real, devastating and often tragic on a large scale. For that reason, I would like to urge all Governments, business leaders, investors and civil society to fight to bend the curve of carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 and to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

We must move to accelerate the green transition, create more jobs and provide sustainable transport and clean energy systems. Malawi is doing its part by implementing various disaster risk-reduction and resilience-building initiatives, but we cannot do it alone. We need adequate, predictable and sustainable resources of climate financing, such as the Green Climate Fund, in order to support our actions.

I would also like to report that my Government is endeavouring to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Given the hostile consequences of climate change, food insecurity and malnutrition are serious threats in a country that still relies on rain-fed subsistence agriculture.

We believe that inclusive and resilient economic growth is key to overcoming hunger and reducing

poverty. In that regard, over the past four years we have relentlessly pursued macroeconomic measures that are now improving Malawi's economy. We have stabilized the economy within four years despite the natural disasters of floods, drought and hunger that hit Malawi for two consecutive years. Within four troubled years, we have reduced inflation from 24 per cent to a single digit percentage. We have reduced interest rates from 25 to 16 per cent. We have taken our import cover from the lowest to the highest point in our economic history. Our import cover has risen from less than two months to six months. We have made the local currency stable and predictable.

Above all, when I began my leadership in Malawi four years ago, we were seeing a 2.4 per cent growth rate in gross domestic product. We now expect growth of 4 per cent in our 2018-2019 financial year, and we expect that to rise to 6 per cent in 2019. We are improving those macroeconomic indicators because a bad economy is an injustice to our country's citizens.

At the same time, we continue to focus on the justice of specific sectors of our society. We are fighting against violence against women and girls. I believe that no human society can meaningfully develop while marginalizing its women. Development must always be inclusive. With the support of the United Nations and other development partners, particularly the European Union, in 2019 Malawi will implement the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

I reiterate that no society can progress without its young people. Malawi is therefore implementing a number of youth programmes, including a skills development programme that involves establishing community technical colleges. We are empowering young people with skills so that they can create jobs and businesses for themselves and others. We believe that no society can develop without a skilled labour force. Our urgent need is to train the trainers for that youth programme.

I would also add that Malawi believes that citizens of every nation must have legal identities. Malawi has fulfilled that principle. Today, more than 95 per cent of my people aged 16 and older have national identity cards, and we are in the process of integrating the national identity cards to be used in education, finance, agriculture, security, social welfare and other public institutions.

Malawi will always be a team player in the international community. We support the United Nations initiatives in fighting global systemic threats and challenges, including terrorism and climate change. We support the United Nations development system. In that regard, Malawi welcomes the adoption of resolution 72/279, on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, as well as resolution 72/305, on the review of the implementation of resolution 68/1, on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council.

We strongly support the Common African Position calling for two permanent seats with veto power and five non-permanent seats for Africa on the Security Council. Why should some nations be afraid of losing power by offering decision-making space to Africa if they do not lose power when they accommodate other continents? Is Africa that much of a threat? That segregation of Africans must come to an end. Why should we allow the Organization to be accused of the hypocrisy that while we preach democracy everywhere, we are not democratic enough to accommodate almost one third of the membership of the Assembly?

I would like to conclude by commending the ironic wisdom in the theme that was chosen for this year. Let us prove that we can live up to its demands. We cannot talk about shared responsibility while we marginalize Africans and deny them full participation in our decisions. We cannot talk about the global leadership of the United Nations when African leadership is not at the decision-making tables. In any political system, we cannot claim relevance for the people that we deny.

The time has come to make the United Nations relevant to all people. The time has come to show a global leadership that is inclusive of all nations. The time has come to pledge shared responsibilities together with Africa and the rest of the world. The time has come for this Assembly to listen to the voice of Africa. Let us listen.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Guatemala.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Morales (*spoke in Spanish*): As I am participating in the opening of this session of the General Assembly, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election to preside over this world forum as the first Latin American woman and the fourth woman in history to hold the position. I wish her success and have no doubt that she will do an excellent job throughout this session.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Guatemala, I would like to thank the international community and the various humanitarian assistance organizations for their solidarity and support in the face of the tragedy that occurred in my country on 3 June as a result of the volcanic eruption that caused irreparable human losses, hundreds of injuries, extensive material damage and resulted in more than 1.7 million victims.

Today we have the opportunity to reflect on the role played by the United Nations in the world order, respecting the sovereignty of the countries that make it up, and I am more than ever convinced that our task is no greater than our forces. Behind me is a symbol that in this era, in which we find so many barriers and differences, we can associate with peace and cooperation, and see as a meeting point for dialogue, tolerance and respect. At the same time, I represent Guatemala, a country with strong traditions and a people that believes in God, that loves and respects the family as the basis of society, that sees life as starting at conception, and that is dedicated to freedom and the construction of a peaceful society. One example of this view of our country and of our search for permanent peace is Guatemala's iron determination to resolve peacefully and definitively the territorial, insular and maritime dispute that we have had with Belize for more than a century and a half.

I am pleased to share with the Assembly that, on 15 April, a referendum was held in Guatemala on the question of submitting this case to the International Court of Justice, resulting in a resounding "yes". Ninety-six per cent of voters voted in favour in the most participatory referendum in the country's history. We are convinced that the resolution of this dispute will bring economic, social and political benefits to both countries. We therefore also welcome the decision of the Government of Belize to set the date of 10 April 2019 for its own referendum, and we look forward to the results with great enthusiasm.

The pursuit of development in the region also leads to peace and prosperity. We can share with joy that Central American economic integration continues to grow in strength and make progress after half a century. This year, we took a historic step with the establishment of a customs union between Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. For Central America, this customs union means that 80 per cent of bilateral trade will enjoy the free transit of goods, thanks to tariff harmonization. Similarly, the cost of moving goods has been reduced by between 21 and 25 per cent, boosting exports and generating an increase in our countries' gross domestic product and improving tax collection and our companies' competitiveness. According to data from the World Bank, transit across our borders has been reduced from between six and 55 hours to 15 minutes. This customs union turns the three Central American countries into a market of 32 million people.

Guatemala's efforts to combat transnational threats are unprecedented in the region. The determination and commitment of the Guatemalan security forces have enabled us to eradicate more than 471 million poppy plants, worth $1.4 billion, over the past two years, with the cooperation of United States agencies. We have seized 34,000 kilos of cocaine and increased heroin seizures by 400 per cent over previous years. This means that in two years we have seized more drugs than in the previous eight years combined, preventing more than 30 million United States and European citizens from being affected by the consumption of these drugs.

Guatemala has made important advances in the areas of transparency and the fight against corruption. Our Open Government initiative and mechanism are working on the basis of our third national action plan, for

the period from 2016 to 2018, which has fulfilled 87 per cent of its commitments in the areas of access to public information, fiscal transparency, civic participation, technological innovation and accountability.

Guatemala has worked hard to comply with the international standards of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, and has ratified the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). These efforts have enabled us to be removed from the list of countries considered to be tax havens. In the same vein, the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic of Guatemala has received ISO 9001:2015 certification for the quality of its management, and it recently received ISO 37001:2016 certification for its anti-bribery management system, the only such certification in the world. The management system helps institutions to improve their overall performance and provide a solid basis for sustainable development initiatives. It is also a tool for nurturing integrity, transparency, honesty and compliance with standards that minimize the risk of bribery by complying with legal obligations. In addition, 16 years after the last census, we carried out a national population and housing census this year with state-of-the-art digital cartography, reaching 96 per cent of households, which will contribute to quality statistical information that will be vital for the evaluation and measurement of our public policies.

I will now address the issues of security and justice, because my Government has been and always will be respectful of the law and the rule of law. With my head held high, I can say that there is no sign of corruption in the management of our Government. On the contrary, as President of the Republic, I have led the fight against corruption and efforts to increase governmental transparency and accountability. Proof of this is that we have taken important steps with the OECD to improve good practices in favour of governmental transparency.

In line with the foregoing, we believe it necessary to respect the sovereignty of each country and to guarantee full freedom and recognize the beliefs, values and principles of each State, and not to impose a global bureaucratic agenda that dictates how that bureaucracy thinks things should be.

After almost four decades of internal armed conflict, Guatemalans signed a strong and lasting peace, and we have undertaken the very arduous and difficult task of building and maintaining it. Building peace is no easy task, as the grave consequences of the armed conflict weakened our institutions. Guatemala is the only State to have signed a cooperation agreement with the United Nations Secretariat establishing an international commission against impunity, known as the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which was originally to last for two years. In weighing the initiative's value, the State of Guatemala decided to extend that period five times. Under the direction of three Commissioners, the CICIG had its high and low points, and as a sovereign State Guatemala decided not to request a sixth extension, as we believe that more than a decade has provided it with enough time to fulfil its mandate. At the same time, we have asked the Secretary-General to begin transferring capacities to those Guatemala institutions responsible for ensuring justice, in accordance with the mandate.

The State of Guatemala is grateful for the technical support provided by CICIG in strengthening its democratic institutions, and we appreciate its contributions to fostering a culture of transparency and combating impunity and, especially, corruption. We are also grateful to the international community for its financial support in sustaining CICIG throughout these years. For the sake of transparency, it would be very fitting for the Secretary-General to report on the details of the use of resources since the establishment of the Commission so as to inform the international community on the allocation of the approved funds. Given the circumstances, it is essential to familiarize the international community with the reasons why it was decided not to extend CICIG's mandate.

First, it violated the political Constitution of the Republic, our laws and the very agreement on which its establishment was based, while overreaching the limits of its mandate, manipulating justice and undermining the presumption of innocence and due process. Secondly, Commissioner Velásquez meddled in the country's internal affairs, while politicizing justice and judicializing politics; those abuses have polarized Guatemalan society and led to an environment of instability jeopardizing national security. In recent years, increasing doubts have been raised about CICIG at the national and international levels and, to our astonishment, a case involving the persecution of a Russian family, the Bitkovs, became known throughout the world. The United States Helsinki Commission has

requested CICIG to provide it with information on that matter, and the Commission has repeatedly refused to do so. That refusal to demonstrate accountability entirely contradicts the spirit of the Commission's fight against impunity.

I reiterate my country's astonishment that despite the fact that the Guatemalan Government expressed its concerns about CICIG abuses, it took a case affecting international interests to get the international community to understand the injustices committed by that United Nations Commission. In that regard, I want to point to the indifference and passivity of the Secretary-General, whom I personally and officially informed for more than a year of the concerns of the Government of Guatemala about the bad practices of CICIG and its Commissioner. I want to make it clear that I will not defend those who are corrupt or advocate for anyone involved in a judicial process pitted against the Guatemalan justice system. At the same time, however, no one can deny that, just like the Bitkovs, many Guatemalan people and families have also suffered illegal persecutions and violations of their human rights and constitutional guarantees at the hands of the Commission, which has enjoyed total impunity.

How is it that the principles of the presumption of innocence and due process have been violated by CICIG in Guatemala? Contrary to the guidelines for international human rights instruments and the Guatemalan constitutional order, the Commission's statements always began with press conferences, mediating cases in violation of the presumption of innocence, because through such mediation pressure was exerted on judges and magistrates with regard to their decisions. The statement made by the jurist who heads the Commission — to the effect that persons become less innocent as investigations and the criminal process move forward — violates the political Constitution of our Republic, which guarantees the human right to the presumption of innocence. A person remains innocent until a final finding of guilt is handed down.

We would be remiss if we did not mention another abuse, which is the occurrences involving the excessive use of force and abuse of power that have become popularly known as "CICIG black Thursdays", which, in addition to the aforementioned press conferences, include arrests and raids characterized by the use of excessive force accompanied by the presence of dozens of heavily armed police with high-calibre rifles. In that regard, Guatemala was astonished by one such raid, on 2 November 2016, which involved illegal entry into the presidential residence. This abuse was deplorable because, in addition to breaking through the three security perimeters of the presidential residence, the very institutional integrity of our country was jeopardized. CICIG personnel and United Nations vehicles took part in that raid.

Those facts were included in a document addressing the concerns of the State of Guatemala delivered personally to the Secretary-General more than a year ago. The fact that CICIG has made the excessive use of pretrial detention the rule in Guatemala, when it should be used only in exceptional circumstances, must also be addressed. Under the laws of Guatemala, no one must remain in pretrial custody for more than three months, but in cases involving CICIG, some were held on remand for more than three years and remained incarcerated for an additional five years as the judicial process unfolded, only to be found innocent later.

To date, hundreds of people have remained in years-long pretrial custody. In one such case, the so-called Peacock case, one person was tried in Guatemala, another in Austria and yet another in Spain. In all three countries, the evidence presented by CICIG was judged insufficient, and they were found not guilty. Today we mourn five deaths caused by the abuse of pretrial detention, in which pressure from CICIG on judges led them to fail to provide alternative forms of incarceration that would have ensured the delivery of adequate medical treatment. I call attention to the fact that such inhumane treatment has not been meted out to even the most dangerous criminals or drug traffickers.

Another case that I would like to bring up is that of Alfredo Zimeri, a young man of 19 years of age, who was brutally beaten by members of the CICIG staff, causing multiple and serious fractures to his face and skull. Mr. Velásquez exceeded the authority of his mandate, in addition to finding himself in a conflict of interest, when he requested recorded footage from the surveillance cameras, which is evidence that only the public prosecutor is authorized to handle. Should this be described as justice or as impunity?

Essentially, CICIG has become a threat to peace in Guatemala. It has set up a system of terror whereby anyone who thinks differently is tracked down, investigated and accused by or referred to the Commission so as to coerce witnesses, whom it later turns into effective collaborators by offering them

summary trials and reduced sentences. Unfortunately, the CICIG ideal has been lost in the bureaucracy of the United Nations and in the cult of the individual, which as a matter of principle should never be greater than the institution it represents. What is certain is that today Guatemala is more polarized than it has been for decades. Some say that we did not have this kind of polarization even during the armed conflict in Guatemala in the 1980s. Groups of people with extremist views have sought to take advantage of the fight against corruption, applauding selective persecutions that have been turned into overt demonstrations by an ideologically biased CICIG. We in Guatemala do not want more confrontation, we want peace and justice. With the same respect that we have always shown, I am publicly asking the Secretary-General, before the Assembly, if we can agree on appointing a new CICIG Commissioner to carry out the transfer of technical capabilities to the appropriate bodies. Guatemala has acted in good faith at all times and we continue to believe firmly that disputes can be resolved amicably through dialogue.

Turning to other subjects, we should point out Guatemala is a country located in a vulnerable tropical zone that is suffering increasingly seriously from the effects of climate change. We are once again dealing with a prolonged drought affecting the most vulnerable sectors of our population. That is why we have invested in rehabilitating all of our irrigation and mini-irrigation systems, which can help to ensure low-income farmers' production. We have focused our public investment budget on our national development priorities and have also been able to contribute to global environmental efforts by designing a technology called bio-fences for decontaminating rivers, beaches, seas and oceans that has been recognized by the World Economic Forum. We continue to work to combat chronic malnutrition through our 2016-2020 national strategy and policy for the prevention of chronic malnutrition, which is directly related to the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and ensuring quality education.

I am very pleased to know that the Assembly has made progress with the negotiations for a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration. My Government is clearly focused on improving security and development conditions in order to reducing migration and the risks that migrants run when embarking on dangerous journeys in their quest to improve their quality of life. In the meantime, we will continue working to strengthen our entire consular network.

In conclusion, I would like to send a message of unity and peace to my people and to the entire international community. I will return to my country with the vision and hope of a better tomorrow for all. I would like to end by quoting the great Ruben Darío when he said about his country: "If your homeland is small, dream it big".

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Guatemala for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jimmy Morales, President of the Republic of Guatemala, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Al Sisi (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, and to express my appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, the President of the previous session.

I also commend the President on her choice of theme for this year's session, for as Member States we desperately need to renew our commitment and contributions to reinforcing the role and status of the United Nations as the basic foundation of a just and effective international order, based on a balance of interests and responsibilities, respect for State sovereignty and the dissemination of a culture of peace, as well as in enabling us to rise above racism, extremism and violence while achieving sustainable development. Those are the values that have shaped

Egypt's vision in relation to the United Nations since we co-founded it seven decades ago, and throughout the six terms that Egypt has served on the Security Council, the latest of which was in 2016 and 2017. Those values are also the driving force behind Egypt's active contribution to United Nations peacekeeping operations, which makes us the world's seventh-largest troop-contributing country.

Despite that strong belief in the values and role of the United Nations, we have to admit in all frankness that there is a flaw in the international system that has a negative effect on its performance and casts a shadow over its credibility for many peoples, particularly in the Arab and African regions, at the heart of which Egypt is situated. How can we blame Arabs who question the credibility of the United Nations and the values it represents at a time when their region is threatened by the disintegration and collapse of nation States, giving way to a wave of terrorism as well as to religious and sectarian conflicts that deplete the Arab peoples' resources? How can we blame Arabs who wonder why the Palestinian people have been denied their legitimate rights to live in dignity and peace in an independent State that reflects their national identity, hopes and aspirations?

Can we say that Africans are exaggerating when they complain about the ineffectiveness of the world order and about the fact that their continent is suffering from an economic order that perpetuates poverty and inequality, continually creates social and political crises and provides no prospects for progress and development? I raise those questions at a time when Egypt is chairing the Group of 77 and China, whose member States make up a majority of the population of this planet and therefore have an enormous interest in enhancing the role of the United Nations. Developing countries cannot afford to exist in an international order that is not governed by laws and the lofty principles on which the United Nations was founded, or in one that can be polarized and subjected to attempts by some to dominate it and impose their will on the rest of the international community.

Let me sum up Egypt's vision in three key principles to which we ought to renew our commitment, and three causes to which we must accord priority if the United Nations is to regain its effectiveness and role. The first principle is that there is no way to achieve an effective international order if its main constituent unit, the nation State, which is premised on the notions of citizenship, democracy and equality, is threatened with disintegration. I speak based on Egypt's unique experience. The Egyptian people have made tremendous efforts to restore their State and save their identity. They chose the capable and just nation State as the pathway to reform in order to achieve their aspirations for freedom, development and dignity.

The disintegration of nations as a result of civil strife and regression to sectarian loyalty rather national identity is responsible for the most dangerous phenomena in our contemporary world, such as armed conflicts, human trafficking, illegal migration, organized crime and the illicit trade in arms and drugs.

There is no doubt that the Arab region is one of the most vulnerable in the world to the dangers of the disintegration of nation States and the ensuing creation of a fertile environment for terrorism and worsening sectarian conflict. Preserving and reforming the foundation of the State is therefore a fundamental priority of Egypt's foreign policy in the Arab region. There can be no way out of the crisis in Syria or the plight of Yemen except by restoring the nation State and preserving its sovereignty and institutions, as well as realizing the legitimate aspirations of its people. Egypt fully supports a United Nations-led political solution in those two brother countries and rejects any exploitation as a means to achieve regional intervention or foster an environment for terrorism, extremism and sectarianism. That same principle applies to our policy on Libya, where Egypt is playing a pivotal role in support of rebuilding the State, especially with respect to the unification of the Libyan armed forces so that they can be capable of defending Libya and countering the dangers of terrorism.

We must not forget that a year has already passed since the adoption of the United Nations initiative on Libya, which seeks to comprehensively address the Libyan crisis. To date, no progress has been made in its implementation, which means we must renew our commitment to reaching a political solution, as per all the elements of the initiative. There is no room for partial solutions in Libya, Syria or Yemen. Major crises require comprehensive approaches, not partial solutions, if we are to halt the loss of life and resources and begin the construction phase.

The second principle is a commitment to peaceful and sustainable solutions to international conflicts. That is the raison d'être of the United Nations. Yet

despite the efforts of the United Nations in numerous conflicts, such as those in South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Mali, so far it has undoubtedly fallen short of finding permanent settlements for them. There is also an urgent need to mobilize resources to help countries in post-conflict situations rehabilitate their institutions and begin reconstruction and development. The fundamental issue here is translating that principle into tangible support for national efforts to overcome conflicts and build States in accordance with their priorities, while avoiding the imposition of alien models of governance and development or interfering in the internal affairs of States and violating their sovereignty.

We cannot talk about the settlement of disputes as a founding principle of the United Nations and an indicator of its credibility without addressing the Palestinian question, which is a perfect example of the failure of the international system to find a just solution based on international legitimacy and the United Nations resolutions that guarantee the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The terms of reference of a just solution and the parameters of a final settlement are well known. There is no time to waste on that debate. What is required is the political will to resume negotiations and achieve a settlement in accordance with those premises. Let me repeat what I have said in previous years at this rostrum — Arabs continue to extend a hand for peace. Our peoples deserve to turn this tragic page in history.

The third principle is a commitment to achieving comprehensive and sustainable development as a necessary precondition for a stable world order and the best way for preventing armed conflict and humanitarian crises. While we welcome the consensus reached on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we note that the implementation of the Goals in that ambitious plan require us to address the problem of financing for development. That can be achieved by creating an international environment that enables the free flow of resources necessary for development without imposing any conditions, while supporting national efforts to mobilize financing for development. The reform of the global economic and financial architecture cannot be delayed. We look forward to seeing the United Nations serve as a platform for developing ideas to achieve this reform, particularly with regard to the creation of mechanisms that would help to prevent illicit financial flows out of developing countries and facilitate the return of such vital assets to their rightful owners.

The international commitment to the preservation of the nation State, the peaceful settlement of disputes, strengthening cooperation to achieve comprehensive development and address imbalances in the global economic system are all necessary conditions for any serious consideration of the revitalization of the United Nations system and the restoration of its credibility. In order to implement these three principles, three priority causes must also be addressed in order to ensure the credibility and the future of the United Nations Organization and the international order as a whole.

First, we need to strengthen partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations. Here I would like to point to the successful experience of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) as a model to be followed. That would help to share the burdens and enable us to benefit from the comparative advantages of both parties in order to address the complex challenges in our region. The main aim of the international efforts is to maintain and build peace and provide humanitarian and developmental assistance.

Egypt is poised to assume the presidency of the African Union in 2019 and looks forward to strengthening the strategic partnership between the African Union and the United Nations through programmes that have a real impact on the continent and by building on gains made in order to consolidate the African Union post-conflict reconstruction and development policy. Egypt is alo host to the AU Center for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development and the counter-terrorism centre for the regional community of Sahel-Saharan States.

Secondly, we must continue our efforts to implement the initiative launched by Egypt during its membership of the Security Council to put in place a comprehensive international framework to develop policies and bolster cooperation in countering terrorism. In that context, we welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to convene the High-level Conference of Heads of Counter-Terrorism Agencies of Member States in June, following the periodic review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

As the Assembly is well aware, early this year Egypt launched its comprehensive Sinai 2018 operation to combat and decisively eradicate terrorism through

a strategy that addresses its security, ideological and development aspects. Based on that experience and on Egypt's overall experience in supporting counter-terrorism efforts in the Middle East and North Africa, I can assure the Assembly that the level of financing, the sophisticated arms and training, as well as the means of communication obtained by those extremist groups, as well as the ease of movement and travel of foreign terrorist fighters, point to the inevitable need to develop a global system to combat terrorism wherever it exists and to cut its sources of support in every possible way.

Thirdly, we must address the shortcomings in the international community's handling of human rights issues. The credibility of the United Nations cannot be restored as long as millions continue to suffer from extreme poverty, live under foreign occupation or fall victim to terrorism and armed conflict. Human rights will not be protected through media defamation, the politicization of human rights mechanisms or the failure to equitably address all issues of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

Egypt has a solid constitutional foundation for the protection of all human rights. Major strides have been achieved in the area of the empowerment of women and young people. Women now hold 25 per cent of the ministerial posts and more than 15 per cent of seats in Parliament. We rely on young people in all leading positions in the country, while the international youth conferences that are held annually in Egypt have also become a regular forum for them to communicate and raise their concerns and priorities. We are determined to continue to accord high priority to the issues of women's economic empowerment, youth, science, technology and innovation during Egypt's presidency of the Group of 77 and China, as a practical demonstration of our commitment to the comprehensive promotion of human rights.

Egypt, like the vast majority of the world's peoples and nations, has a vested interest in restoring the credibility of international multilateral action with the United Nations at its forefront. We believe that the Organization can overcome scepticism about its merits and credibility by restoring the lofty principles on which its Charter was premised and by acting in accordance with the priorities I have addressed, which reflect the aspirations of our peoples. Only then will our Organization reclaim its credibility and our peoples regain their confidence in a future of peace, cooperation and respect for one another.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Egypt for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdel Fattah Al Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Benítez (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour and privilege for me to address the Assembly for the first time at the beginning of my tenure as President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Paraguay has always shown its unconditional support for the United Nations system and will continue to unwaveringly assume its commitments as a Member of the Organization, as well as its active responsibility based on the principles that we all recognize — freedom, justice, national sovereignty, independence and the integrity of States. My nation has a deep sense of equality based on the recognition of human dignity. We reject violence and intolerance and love peace. Ours is a society of diverse cultures. It is bilingual, capable of overcoming difficulties selflessly and responsibly, which requires integrity and righteousness, the civic values intrinsic to democracy.

We are very pleased that the most democratic and representative body of our Organization is being led by a woman who is also Latin American. We offer our congratulations and best wishes for success to the new President of the General Assembly, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés. We also salute Secretary-General António Guterres, who is doing an excellent job leading the institution. We reiterate our absolute confidence in and support for his management.

We offer our posthumous tribute to the former Secretary-General and Nobel Peace Prize laureate the late Kofi Annan. He was an extraordinary leader, humanist and promoter of peace who took pains to ensure that the Organization serves the peoples as well as the States.

In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world that is evolving at an accelerated pace, collectively addressing global challenges is an unavoidable responsibility of the international community. The General Assembly must continue to be strengthened, as it is the voice of the nations of the world. The Security Council must be reformed with a view to making it more democratic and inclusive so as to fulfil the mandate of maintaining international peace and security for this and future generations. Paraguay advocates adding more developing countries so as to balance the membership of the Council, as well as totally eliminating the veto, a privilege that no longer corresponds to the political reality of our times.

The Republic of Paraguay has strongly supported the reforms promoted by the Secretary-General in the pillars of development, peace and security, and management. We believe that those efforts have been successful and that they have been deployed at the right time, since in order to face the challenges posed by sustainable development, we must have an efficient, transparent Organization that has the capacity to support countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly countries with special needs and challenges, such as landlocked developing countries.

The poverty that is currently affecting millions of human beings is due to the poor distribution of goods rather than their scarcity. As leaders it is our responsibility to stop viewing poverty simply as an economic indicator and instead to see it as a human problem. In our view, ignoring the human aspect when we speak about poverty is going against the principles that this institution and our democracies represent.

Our Government is committed to making social policies more far-reaching and intensifying our support to human development by improving the democratization of access to education, health care and dignified employment. That is the way forward, in both the medium and long terms, to achieving greater social equity and collective prosperity. We are especially focusing on young people, who have extraordinary potential to help transform Paraguay and the world. We must take advantage of the opportunity that demography has given us to lay solid foundations for a better future. With that purpose in mind, we are initiating a process for the profound transformation of our education policies that will enable us to bring children and young people into the education system, with a special emphasis on training teachers and professors.

We are going to install and consolidate a social protection system that addresses people's entire lives. Paraguay must protect its people from conception to old age. There are many pending issues in the situation of people with disabilities and this is a key moment for Paraguay as a nation to promote their rights. We will give particular attention to ensuring that our public policies are cross-cutting so that we can implement them fully. We are also working to promote women as a factor for change in our country, creating the conditions necessary for equity, equality and empowerment. With the support of our mothers, wives and daughters, we firmly believe that we can create a better country and society. And our indigenous peoples occupy a special place in our Government. It is time for the State to shoulder the task of creating better living conditions for them. That is a moral obligation.

Paraguay is deeply concerned about the scourge of terrorism and believes that there can never be any justification for the use of violence as a means to an end. We condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reaffirm that the fight against terrorism and the protection of human rights are not opposing goals but rather complement and mutually reinforce one another. We continue to work relentlessly with allied countries to fiercely fight every form of crime. We cannot accept the possibility that our borders can become places where criminal organizations can thrive. In the few weeks since my presidential term began, we have carried out some operations that have produced very positive results in the fight against drug trafficking and have shown through our political will that we are determined not to give up under any circumstances. International drug trafficking is accustomed to believing itself untouchable and is constantly seeking power. I have promised my people, and today I pledge it before the entire international community, that we will not allow that to happen. We will continue fighting and working alongside every State to eradicate these criminal networks.

As a priority, climate change is unquestionably a global challenge. We States have a crucial decision in our hands — we can slow climate change and deal with its consequences, or deny it and continue making it worse. With its adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015, the international community decided to work together to combat climate change, without ignoring the historical responsibility that the most highly developed nations have for the production of greenhouse gases. The issue of environmental responsibility is shaping Paraguay's vision for strategic development. We generate more renewable energy per capita than any other country on the planet, and we are also a major exporter of that energy. At the same time, we also intend to expand and improve our national and regional power systems.

Democracy has been consolidated in many countries, but we have the obligation to adequately address the demands of a people who are impatient with institutions whose legitimacy has been jeopardized by corruption, inequality and inefficiency in the face of urgent need. The citizens of Paraguay — indeed, the citizens of the world — have woken up. Their voices resound in our streets, calling for us to tackle corruption and impunity, and it is our obligation to listen to them and not ignore their just demands. In my country, we understand that dialogue and convergence are fundamental tools for major reform of the judicial system, which is a priority for us. Judicial security and the efficacy of justice are a nation's pillars. Without justice there can be no order, and without order chaos reigns, and in chaos there can be no peace or social development. I firmly believe in our institutions and in the importance of reforming and strengthening them so that they respond to our societies' current and future needs. Only with strong institutions and systems can we ensure the growth of our democracies.

Paraguay is one of the most open economies in the world. We understand that interaction with the world is an essential element for development. We consider alliances to be an essential way of improving global integration. Our country is firmly committed to full regional integration and aspires to build it in full respect for the sovereignty and independence of each of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples. But we cannot ignore the fact that dictatorial regimes that rob their own populations of their happiness, hopes, dreams and human rights persist on our continent. We want to express our solidarity with the peoples of Venezuela and Nicaragua in the face of the abuses of power in their countries. We firmly believe that despite our differences, our region must work together to create the wealth and share the prosperity that will benefit our peoples. The pursuit of ideologies as an act of fanaticism or a way to assert superiority must be eradicated. Our goal should be to work for the greater good, while respecting our differences, and for the benefit of our communities.

Every country faces individual challenges on its path to sustainable development, but the international community has acknowledged that the most vulnerable countries — including landlocked developing countries, whose geography creates special needs and challenges — require special attention. Those needs and challenges make themselves felt mainly in the area of trade. Paraguay has chaired the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries for two years and has made a priority of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and urges States, particularly our trading partners and countries of transit, to take the Programme of Action into due consideration.

We believe that the Arms Trade Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represent major steps towards disarmament and non-proliferation. The Republic of Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations, in its belief in the importance of contributing to the achievement of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Paraguayan military and police personnel, duly trained prior to deployment, are currently serving in various United Nations peacekeeping missions around the world.

Paraguay respects international law. All of my Government's decisions are based on its principles, and we faithfully implement all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. My country supports Taiwan's legitimate request to be included in the United Nations system and believes that Taiwan can make a major contribution to our work. This is all based on the principle of universality that characterizes our Organization.

This year, we will adopt two historic agreements, the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the global compact on refugees. Paraguay

has actively participated in the negotiations on both documents, which seek to reach agreements that benefit refugees and migrants equally, as well as the countries and communities from which they come, through which they transit and to which they go.

In 1958, Paraguay launched the World Friendship Crusade, an endeavour that has deeply moved our people. In May 2011, the General Assembly decided to support that initiative by declaring 30 July as the International Day of Friendship. I urge the leaders of all Member States of the Organization to promote friendship as a noble and valuable sentiment in the lives of human beings.

This year marks the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone in the history of humankind that enabled us to recognize formally and for the first time that all people have fundamental rights by virtue of their human condition, without distinction based on race, sex, nationality, religion or any other condition. Paraguay reaffirms its commitment to the Declaration and emphasizes that the United Nations must continue to play a fundamental role in ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was an enormously important commitment. It represents the beginning of a process of restructuring aimed at transforming the growth paradigms of today's generations and ensuring the well-being of those of the future. The success of that new global agenda depends on the commitment of States and on international solidarity. We therefore call for that global partnership to mobilize the resources necessary for its full implementation, including technology transfers, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building, particularly as they relate to developing countries. In fulfilment of the commitment Paraguay made on 25 September 2015, we presented our first voluntary national review of the progress we have made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July.

In the face of an international scenario characterized by political uncertainty and economic volatility, we need collective and comprehensive strategies with a sense of shared responsibility. That is why it is vital that we decide whether we can allow States to impose themselves and obtain the greatest advantage they can from their position, or whether we should work actively for stability and common peace by strengthening multilateral instruments and mutual cooperation. The United Nations Organization is a continuing work-in-progress. We must all maintain a constant and unalterable commitment to working on strengthening it and building its capacity to adapt and respond to the common challenges facing humankind. May God bless our nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mario Abdo Benitez, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Macri (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate the President on her election to lead this session of the General Assembly. I am sure that her work will attest to the pertinence of women's leadership.

It is an honour to return to the General Assembly to share our vision for the stage we are currently going through in Argentina and to ratify our commitment to making our country a protagonist that is fully integrated into the world. Our country is undergoing a period of profound change. We are determined to experience it with humility, while accepting the difficulties we face, and in our belief that we are making the right efforts. I know that the efforts required are great, and I want to thank every Argentine for that. We knew it would not be easy, because we are making changes without taking shortcuts or compromising our future. We are building a consensus for equitable and sustainable development. Two years ago, I shared here for the first time my view of Argentina as a reliable partner of the international community and a good-faith mediator of regional and

international politics (see A/71/PV.8). Today I would like to renew that vision.

Since I took office as President, we have been committed to an intelligent integration into the world, based on the value of our region, Latin America and the Caribbean. We are a zone of peace, with young populations full of talent and vitality and with abundant resources and natural reserves. We are working for greater integration among ourselves and with the rest of the world. That is evidenced by the willingness for dialogue and cooperation between the countries of the South American Common Market and the Pacific Alliance. We seek to have a positive impact on the world order of the twenty-first century. From the South, we take an optimistic view that ponders the opportunities and challenges of globalization. Intelligent integration is also part of our contribution to building a region and a world order that are stable and inclusive and that respect our values of peace, democracy and human rights.

I would therefore like to take a moment once again to express our concern regarding the human rights situation in Venezuela. Given its seriousness, Argentina wants to refer the situation of the Venezuelan dictatorship's crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court. I call on Venezuela to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis so that we can use international cooperation to address the health and food deprivation of displaced persons. We are part of a broad regional response that seeks to mitigate the difficulties of millions of Venezuelans in the wake of their exodus from their country by taking them in and integrating them into society. Argentina has already received 130,000 Venezuelans.

For decades we have convened here to safeguard international peace and security. However, we live in a world that is not immune to serious threats such as organized crime, cybercrime and terrorism, which require cooperative responses if they are to be dealt with. In recent years, with political will and greater cooperation with our partners in the region and the world, we have managed to increase the quantity of drugs seized, dismantle criminal drug-trafficking networks, catch more national and international fugitives and reduce homicides related to drug trafficking throughout our country. At the same time, we continue to seek the necessary consensus to design a complementary judicial authority at the regional level and thereby combat organized crime collectively.

Argentina condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We suffered directly from two very serious terrorist attacks, in 1992 and 1994, which claimed the lives of 107 people and left hundreds wounded. Our country will not cease its efforts to bring all those involved in the attacks before Argentine courts so that they can be tried and ultimately sentenced. In that regard, considering that next year will mark 25 years since the attack on the Argentina Israeli Mutual Association, I should like once again to ask the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate with the Argentine judicial authorities to advance investigations into the most brutal terrorist attack we have ever experienced on our territory. We call on countries that are friendly to Argentina to assist us by not harbouring under diplomatic immunity any of the accused for whom international arrest warrants and INTERPOL red notices have been issued. Here I would also like to remember the five Argentines who were killed on 31 October 2017 in this city. My heart is with the families of the victims, as well as all victims of barbaric acts of terrorism around the world.

Argentina maintains a strategic vision for the South Atlantic, where we seek to peacefully develop an active policy on resources, the environment and science, which includes the question of the Malvinas. I should like to reaffirm once again before the Assembly the legitimate and imprescriptible sovereign rights of Argentina over the Malvinas, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. I should also like to reaffirm my Government's commitment to this new phase in relations with the United Kingdom, based on building mutual trust and a broad and positive dialogue.

Argentina is a country with a democratic and multilateral identity. Multilateralism is fundamental to highlighting our national interests and seeking consensus. We maintain our firm commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which we established as pillars of our Government's policy on the eradication of poverty, combating climate change and achieving gender equality.

Argentina has been demonstrating its willingness to contribute to strengthening global governance. We hosted the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference last year, where it was made clear that there is a future after the meeting in Buenos Aires. In 2019, we will host the second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. We will also

be preparing to chair the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, reaffirming our historic commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We are presiding over the Group of Twenty (G-20) this year in a spirit of unity and a constant quest for consensus.

The results being achieved give us reason for enthusiasm. In every working group and ministerial meeting a sense of collective commitment is prevailing, as was true of the Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting, where a willingness to revitalize the multilateral trading system was expressed. The first G-20 leaders summit to take place in South America will be held on 30 November in Buenos Aires. With the support of our partners, the G-20 will once again demonstrate its validity and relevance.

The international community is facing challenges that require effective and efficient compromises. They demand solutions reached through dialogue and consensus-building. The theme for this session of the Assembly emphasizes leadership and shared responsibilities for achieving equitable, sustainable and peaceful societies. Argentines are committed to doing their part to make them a reality.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mauricio Macri, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berset (*spoke in French*): It is a great privilege for me to stand before the General Assembly today in New York. We are gathered here because of those who believed, following the tragedy of the Second World War, that an international order based on rules and dialogue, rather than on relationships of power, would lead us to peace and prosperity. They were right. Given the considerable challenges and transformations we must face in the world today, no person or country has the capacity to stand alone. By that I mean globalization, inequality, war and internal conflict, as well as extremism, migration flows and climate change, and even health crises and the digital revolution. It is our shared responsibility — the responsibility of each and every State Member of the United Nations — to ensure that international institutions and organizations are up to the task of supporting us in this endeavour. Unfortunately, there seems to be a tendency at the moment to seek the answers to these problems in nationalist isolation and in increasing mistrust with regard to cooperation between States.

We are seeing a new international order take shape, with new actors and a new middle class. According to the World Bank, between 1990 and 2015 — in a single generation — the number of people affected by extreme poverty fell from 2 billion to 700 million, a result that can be described as exceptional. What is of great concern to us today, however, is that these changes have gone hand in hand with the erosion of the international system founded on the rule of law. I believe that we are witnessing a real crisis in multilateralism, perhaps paradoxically at the very moment when we are trying to forge the main pillars of the global governance of the future. As a country that is interconnected and open to the world, Switzerland understands the value of a working international legal order based on exchange and multi-stakeholder dialogue, which guarantees stability and is consistent with Swiss values as they are set out in our Constitution.

There are crises currently ongoing in many parts of the world, some of which have been there for a very long time, particularly the Middle East, where re-engaging in dialogue is the only option. Switzerland is working for a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians in accordance with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions, based on a negotiated two-State solution.

The conflict in Syria has entered its eighth year, with no real end in sight. The basic rules and principles of international humanitarian law and human rights are not being respected. In recent months the conflict has intensified further on various fronts. More than

13 million men, women and children in Syria are dependent on humanitarian aid. It is essential that we step up our efforts to find a political solution to the conflict. Only a negotiated solution that includes all sectors of Syrian society can guarantee lasting peace and sustainable reconstruction in Syria and the region as a whole.

In Yemen, too, the conflict has been going on for years. The armed conflict has deprived millions of people of water, food and medical care. Switzerland calls on all parties to cease hostilities and come to the negotiating table to seek solutions to end this humanitarian crisis. In that regard, Switzerland remains ready and willing to play its part — for example, by hosting peace talks in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations.

Large-scale health crises accompany all of those conflicts. The spread of disease, especially in war zones and refugee camps, is a major burden on weakened or ruined health systems. In that regard, it is vital to protect health-care facilities and personnel in order to maintain working health systems and access to medical care.

The United Nations is truly the cornerstone of peaceful coexistence between all States, in accordance with the rules we have established together. It is indispensable and, above all, ideally placed to tackle contemporary challenges, especially the fight against inequality. To fulfil that role, the United Nations must be strong. If it is to make the maximum impact with the means at its disposal, it must adapt to an ever-changing environment and constantly re-examine its working methods. Switzerland is therefore an active supporter of the reform programmes launched by Secretary-General António Guterres. Those reforms, in the areas of peace and security, development and management, aim to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations in the face of current global challenges. We are engaged on multiple fronts. Today I would like to address the following points. I shall begin by addressing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Switzerland is working actively to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We have been working to put a robust monitoring mechanism in place to provide for voluntary national reviews and report on progress made towards achieving the Goals. More specifically, we have contributed, with other countries, to providing better statistical data. We are also engaging with innovative projects in areas such as health care, education, energy and innovation. Nonetheless, we are all aware that there is still work to be done to combat global warming and the negative environmental impacts of economic development.

I want to take this opportunity to stress the essential contribution of culture and cultural diversity to building a sustainable and successful society. Without a policy of culture, there is no economic, social or environmental sustainability. Culture must therefore occupy a central place in development policies. In January, more than 30 countries reaffirmed culture's essential contribution to our lives, as well as the importance of culture overall, in the Davos declaration.

Secondly, with regard to the Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court, respect for human dignity and fundamental rights is not optional but rather an obvious necessity for stable and sustainable development. Switzerland strongly supports the work of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, both based in Geneva, with a view to enabling them to fulfil their duty to promote, strengthen and protect human rights in the world. International cooperation is also essential in preventing conflict and establishing a framework for lasting peace. I would like to mention in particular the fight against impunity. Switzerland worked for the adoption of the Rome Statute and the establishment of the International Criminal Court, exactly 20 years ago. We will continue to support that unique international cooperative effort at the service of the victims of the most serious crimes.

Thirdly, I would like to speak about Geneva and the good offices of Switzerland. We intend to continue to build bridges, support negotiations and mediation and use our diplomacy and good offices to help countries and international and regional organizations find solutions to conflicts and create space for new reflections and new topics. In Geneva, Switzerland makes all of the preparations needed so that discreet peace talks, of the kind undertaken by the parties to the conflicts in Syria and Yemen, can take place. Geneva is also home to several United Nations agencies — the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization — in addition to numerous international organizations. Geneva can therefore serve as a platform for dialogue on new challenges at the interface between politics, society, innovation, science and economy. I would mention in particular of the areas of Internet

governance and digitalization. Those topics develop and increasingly require synergies and dialogue between the traditional arenas of internatio..al action. However, Switzerland's role is not limited to Geneva. For example, we have actively contributed to the process of negotiating the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and we are grateful for the trust placed in Switzerland in that regard. The management of migration flows at the global level is an enormous undertaking that necessitates the participation of all the relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Beleffi (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Policies relying on trade protectionism and selfish interests are enjoying a certain popularity at present. They would like us to believe that the world is a zero-sum game and that there are no winners without losers. However, today, as in the past, withdrawal, protectionism, threats and violence will not provide answers to the dysfunctions and disparities of the world in which we live. Worse still, such policies can lead only to a drop in trade and, ultimately, a decline in prosperity. They nurture mistrust and isolation, which obstruct knowledge-sharing, competition and innovation. Our world will become all the more impoverished, both spiritually and culturally, and we will set off alone in search of solutions for problems that can only be solved together.

The current malaise serves as a warning that we must do everything we can to prevent a world in which we look out only for ourselves, and to encourage a world of cooperation between States, in which we strive for the common good, for causes such as peace, sustainable development and environmental protection. We can overcome the challenges and causes of growing inequality, demographic change or migration only if we approach them with a spirit of mutual trust. All States are winners if we see others as potential partners instead of competitors. All States are stronger if the international situation is more stable. The world is not a zero-sum game. To the contrary, it is a positive-sum game.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sirisena (*spoke in Sinhalese; English interpretation provided by delegation*): It is with great pleasure that I stand before the members of the General Assembly this evening at the seventy-third session representing Sri Lanka for the fourth time.

Sri Lanka, as a State Member of the United Nations, has acted in accordance with treaties and conventions of the United Nations at all times. For the past three and a half years, I have been the Head of State of Sri I anka, and today we are quite pleased with the progress we have made during my presidency. I was elected President of Sri Lanka in January 2015. At that time, the country's executive presidency held excessive powers. In fact, those powers exceeded those of a monarch, reaching almost the level of an emperor's. However, I handed over to the Sri Lanka Parliament those excessive powers. It is with pleasure that I inform the Assembly of the manner in which I let go of the excessive powers of the executive presidency.

During the past three and a half years, we have taken action to consolidate democracy, human rights and the fundamental rights of the people. Furthermore, the freedom of media and the independence of the judiciary have been strengthened. That is why I can state with dignity that the Sri Lanka we see today is entirely different from the Sri Lanka of three and a half years ago.

I also urgently want to draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that as States Members of the United Nations, we have certain responsibilities and duties to the world. For instance, the United Nations must focus greater attention on trends in international politics today. When we are talking about such worldwide trends, the issue of refugees is a major and very complex one,

as we all know. The United Nations, its Members and many other organizations today render a great service in supporting refugees. However, those efforts need to be more expansive and further strengthened to the benefit of refugees.

Sri Lanka follows a non-aligned foreign policy and is one of the most senior members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. A very successful summit of the Non-Aligned Movement was held in Sri Lanka in 1976. Sri Lanka considers every nation of the world a friend. We have no enemies in the world today, and we are very happy about that.

With regard to trends in international politics, I believe that the issue of the Palestinian people requires greater attention from the United Nations and all world Powers. Sri Lanka has always supported the freedom struggle of the Palestinian people. Many inhumane acts have been committed in that region, and I therefore believe that the United Nations and every nation of the world must stand strong to prevent them.

Among the many other problems plaguing the world, poverty is a major issue affecting the world's populations today. I believe that the United Nations must be more involved in fighting poverty. Hundreds of millions of people across the world spend their days in hunger as a result of income disparities and climate change, giving rise to many issues in terms of alleviating poverty and battling the consequences of climate change. In the face of the many challenges that cause poverty, I believe that major efforts are needed in countries heavily affected by climate change in order to help people become prosperous.

As I said, there are many issues plaguing the world. The arms racket, the drug problem and the issue of illegal pharmaceuticals are also major concerns affecting society today. I am happy to note that action was taken yesterday, with President Donald Trump of the United States, and the United Nations, to bring together the nations of the world through the Global Call to Action on the World Drug Problem. That is something we greatly appreciate. Ending the drug menace requires extensive efforts from each and every country, working together with the United Nations.

Furthermore, at the international level, we know that the United Nations plays a very important role, particularly through the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which is of huge significance to everything living on Earth. As a Member of the United Nations, Sri Lanka ratified the Agreement. I would like to draw members' attention to the fact that we are committed to taking the necessary action on agreed matters under the Paris Agreement.

When it comes to Sri Lanka, as I mentioned earlier, we have taken action to consolidate democracy and strengthen fundamental rights, including human rights and media rights. I would like to point out that Sri Lanka suffered from a long-drawn-out conflict for 30 years. It has now been 10 years since the conflict ended, during which time a massive transformation has taken place in Sri Lanka, especially during the past three and a half years. The Government in Sri Lanka has taken action on the post-war situation. We have strengthened national reconciliation and taken steps to ensure that the war cannot recur, with an extensive programme currently being implemented to achieve that. With regard to human rights, the Government is continuing to fulfil its duty to protect the people's rights and to seek the support of the United Nations in strengthening the programme, which is the course of action that we want to follow.

Sri Lankan forces were able to defeat one of the most brutal terrorist organizations in the world. That is why Sri Lanka today has emerged strongly as a country that is permanently at peace. Our security forces defeated a very serious terrorist organization. Here I would like to very respectfully salute the efforts made by the Tri-Forces of Sri Lanka to bring peace to our country and strengthen its unity. As I said, 10 years have now passed since the end of the conflict. I therefore encourage the international community not to think of Sri Lanka as it did 10 years ago but to view it from a fresh perspective. We suffered a difficult war, and today permanent peace prevails in our country. My Government has been undertaking many actions to consolidate reconciliation. Human rights are being protected and economic prosperity is being achieved for a better future for Sri Lankans, and our future as a peaceful nation therefore deserves to be looked at from a fresh perspective.

I urge the international community to allow Sri Lankans to resolve their problems on their own. A nation's independence is of the utmost importance. But our humanitarian efforts and our work to strengthen democracy require the international community's cooperation. If Sri Lanka is to continue in its commitment to forging ahead in consolidating democracy and protecting human rights, it needs the

international community's attention. As an independent country, we reject any efforts by foreign Powers to exert influence on us. We appeal to the international community to give us room to resolve our problems and to respect the Sri Lankan people's right to find solutions to their problems. And while that is something that we are very willing to do, I would also like to ask for the international community's cooperation in making that a reality.

We are working to climinate fear and suspicion among the various ethnic groups in our country, and I believe that with the cooperation of the international community that can be achieved, not only in Sri Lanka but in many other countries of the world. The poor must be given priority. The new generation deserves to be heard. They need to be provided with solutions to their problems.

In conclusion, I would like to cite a verse from Lord Buddha found in the Salla Sutta of the Samyutta Nikaya in the Tripitaka, where it is said that a man pierced by an arrow feels two kinds of pain: first, the physical pain caused by the arrow and, secondly, the mental pain resulting from his anxiety about what has happened. Similarly, the people of Sri Lanka have suffered both the physical pain of the war and the feelings that it arouses. I therefore urge the international community to extend its support and cooperation to Sri Lanka.

I thank the Assembly, and may the Noble Triple Gem bless us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Pahor: It is always an honour to take part in this great General Assembly.

Today we live in a world where new challenges are multiplying and old ones never seem to go away. The multilateral system is being challenged. It is a system that we have spent more than 70 years building and that should prevent humankind from ever again experiencing the horrors of war. It is a system that ensures respect for human rights and international law and that promotes social progress, development and better standards of living for everybody.

The case for multilateralism is clear. As Member States, we all have the responsibility to find common solutions to the common threats and challenges we face, while protecting the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations. That spirit of cooperation and common responsibility must guide our work in the years to come. No nation or State will make gains if it strives only to assert its own interests.

In today's unpredictable world, I urge us all to unite our efforts to strengthen multilateralism as the only viable way to secure peace and security for future generations. My country, Slovenia, stands firm in defence of that multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. The Republic of Slovenia's commitment to the multilateral system remains as strong as ever, based on shared values, the rule of law and human rights.

We should all strive to make the United Nations a stronger and more efficient Organization, reformed in a way that means it can respond and assist in solving the most pressing concerns of our time. Slovenia strongly supports the reform efforts by Secretary-General António Guterres. A lot has been achieved during tne past year, but progress needs to continue.

At the end of the day, the success of the United Nations reform largely depends on us, the Member States. It depends on our political will and ability to translate words into action for the benefit of all of us. We hope that will also give fresh impetus to the reform of the Security Council in order to secure a fairer representation of today's world.

Only a rules-based international order can guarantee the equality of peoples and nations. If we want to create a more stable, peaceful and just future, Member States must adhere to international law. Respect for international law and the rule of law is

a precondition to living in peace and security for all States — the entire international community.

Given that I come from a country adjacent to the Western Balkans region, I would like to stress the importance of international law and the judgments of international courts in relation to the reconciliation process in that region. Recognizing and accepting historical facts, no matter how painful they are, is the basis for stability and progress, both of which are needed in the Western Balkans region.

I also wish to emphasize the necessity of full respect for human rights, which is always pertinent, particularly in today's world. Without that, there can be no peace, security or development. The United Nations has been instrumental in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide, but we must not forget that the primary responsibility for their fulfilment lies, once again, with the State. No State rights, emergencies or political reasons can ever excuse the violations of human rights.

As the current Chair of the Human Rights Council, Slovenia remains a strong supporter of human rights for all. My country considers it important to ensure that the Council contributes to the strengthening of human rights in the world, perhaps now more than ever before. We must all endeavour to ensure the Council's credibility and better effectiveness. We sincerely hope and expect that the United States of America, a traditional promoter and supporter of respect for human rights around the world, will remain committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. Through dialogue, Slovenia will continue to seek results in the process of strengthening the legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness of the Human Rights Council.

War, violent extremism and terrorism always represent an assault on human rights. Those atrocities shock us to the core of our human conscience. Effective law-enforcement measures are indispensable in the fight against terrorism, but terrorism will never be defeated by security measures alone. Our endeavours to counter and prevent terrorism have to be comprehensive, while also targeting the root causes of radicalization.

Impunity represents one of the major obstacles to the prevention of the grave and systematic violations of human rights committed against civilians in armed conflicts. All parties to a conflict, including non-State actors, must comply with international humanitarian law. Ending impunity is essential to enabling a war-torn society to recover from conflict as well as to preventing future human rights abuses. Slovenia is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court. We stress the importance of effective cooperation with the International Criminal Court, including by the Security Council, and we invite States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute.

We must preserve and protect the non-proliferation architecture, based on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. We must implement all binding international treaties concerning weapons of mass destruction, particularly the NPT, whose fiftieth anniversary we are celebrating this year.

Slovenia supports resolving our pressing proliferation issues by diplomatic and peaceful means. To that end, we reiterate our support for the Iran nuclear deal, as long as Iran honours its obligations. We welcome the recent developments relating to the Korean peninsula and hope to see its complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. Slovenia continues to support humanitarian demining, mine-victim assistance and the elimination of unexploded ordnance and remnants of war.

The International Trust Fund Enhancing Human Security (ITF), a humanitarian and non-profit organization, was established two decades ago by the Slovenian Government, and its many activities around the globe — from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Afghanistan and Colombia — are concrete reflections of that support. We are grateful to the many States that cooperate and support the demining work of the ITF.

Slovenia considers international development cooperation an important element of our overall international endeavours. Through it we support efforts in partner countries to eradicate hunger, protect the environment and contribute to overall sustainable development. Through its efforts in the Western Balkans, the European neighbourhood and sub-Saharan Africa, Slovenia is directly contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Slovenia has also taken up the task of implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level and is trying to contribute to its implementation at the global level with a sense of urgency. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change are, in our view, two documents that together

provide a clear path and vision for a more sustainable future for our planet and prosperity for its people. By the way, Slovenia ranks eighth out of at least 150 countries in realizing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, something I am very proud of.

Today more than ever before, we need a strong multilateral system in which the emphasis must be on acting more collectively, rapidly and effectively. I would like to conclude by assuring the Assembly that Slovenia is committed to supporting the United Nations and determined to work with all partners to deliver tangible and meaningful results that will advance peace, security, development and human rights for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Borut Pahor, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lungu: Let me join other world leaders in congratulating Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. Zambia fully supports her endeavour to diligently discharge her responsibilities in the Assembly. We are delighted to note that, after more than a decade, a woman has once again taken up this important seat as the fourth female President of the General Assembly since the establishment of this world body.

As the United Nations celebrates its seventy-third anniversary next month, it needs to forcefully continue to promote international peace, cooperation and the development of societies that are free from hunger, poverty and disease. In doing so, we should endeavour to explore new ideas and best practices to meet the expectations of our people, against a backdrop of the effective and efficient use of limited global resources. We are therefore confident that the President will bring a fresh dimension to the fore as we jointly seek solutions to the economic, social and political challenges that confront us.

Since the founding of the United Nations 73 years ago, we believe that Africa should have made remarkable progress. Yet Africa's economic structure has only minimally changed. That is a concern that has been voiced at both continental and global forums. The effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union therefore presents huge opportunities for Africa to revitalize its growth and accelerate its transformation. Both frameworks seek to achieve inclusive growth, sustainable development and peace and security for the continent.

Zambia's development path is guided by its Vision 2030 through the implementation of its seventh national development plan, which is focused on transforming Zambia into a prosperous middle-income country by 2030. To achieve that, we must overcome many hurdles. Our economy, like many other developing economies, needs to diversify. We are therefore determined to address our challenges by creating a diversified and resilient economy that is driven by the agriculture, tourism and energy sectors, among others. That will be supported by a robust infrastructure development programme. In that regard, we need strengthened and mutually beneficial partnerships in the context of South-South cooperation, as well as regional and development cooperation, which remain crucial to unlocking diversified growth.

Zambia is dedicated to the implementation of Agenda 2063 of the African Union, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, including on climate change, and of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development. That is why my Government has mainstreamed those global development agendas in its seventh national development plan.

I am glad to note that my Government has been making steady progress in infrastructure development

as a key enabler for recovery and improvement. We are also implementing several policies and structural reforms under the Economic Stabilization and Growth Programme. As we pursue those goals, we are mindful of the challenges in mobilizing financing for development, as well as declining donor funding, particularly for least-developed countries and landlocked developing countries. We therefore call on all partners to work with us to ensure that together we can effectively implement the Sustainable Development Goals for the good of our people.

It is gratifying to note that the second United Nations High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, to be held in March 2019 in Buenos Aires, will present an opportunity to register significant progress on development cooperation among the countries of the South.

To turn to the issue of peace, since 1945 the United Nations and the international community have been consistently and strongly advocating the need for the preservation and promotion of peace. Recent development frameworks have also given prominence to efforts to protect global peace and security. My Government therefore fully supports Security Council resolution 2378 (2017), which focuses on peacekeeping reforms. Zambia is also committed to the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, as set out in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, sent to Member States by the Secretary-General in August.

I am also glad to say that my Government has recently increased its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and is currently a major contributor to peacekeeping missions. Zambia is also one of the countries that has taken the lead in increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations. We also join other Member States in saluting the gallant men and women in blue helmets for the sacrifices they are making to foster peace in the world.

In our continuing efforts to contribute to regional and world peace, Zambia recently took up the chairmanship of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security of the Southern African Development Community. I can only assure Member States that we will discharge that duty with the utmost dedication to the cause of regional and world peace and security.

On gender equality and women's economic empowerment, I want to reaffirm my Government's commitment to eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. We are making efforts to review and enact new legislation and policies that are gender responsive. Progress is also being recorded on the implementation of our 50-50 enrolment policy, as schools are now compelled by law to enrol equal numbers of girls and boys.

In 2017 my Government commenced the distribution of free sanitary napkins to girls in rural and suburban areas in an effort to keep girls in school. That programme was introduced in order to improve girls' access to education, as a lack of proper sanitary napkins often limits their ability to attend school. In addition, we have continued to implement the re-entry policy for pregnant girls. That programme is a success, as a number of girls have been retained in school after giving birth. We believe that measure is critical to ensuring equal opportunities for our girls. We have no doubt that those and many other efforts will lay a firm foundation for our attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, on gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

The world has continued to witness unprecedented mass movements of refugees and migrants, which has had political, social, economic and human rights ramifications for a number of host countries. Let me underscore the importance of collaborative efforts on the part of the global community in tackling issues relating to the current refugee and migration crisis. That will ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants and refugees. We therefore welcome the convening in December of the Conference on International Migration and look forward to the upcoming adoption of the unprecedented global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration. We are hopeful that this will provide us with an opportunity to improve global governance on migration and refugees, as well as to strengthen the contribution of migrants to sustainable development. In that regard, I want to underline the importance of respecting the principle of shared responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees and migrants. Going forward, I want to reaffirm my Government's commitment to its international obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, whereby we will continue to play a meaningful role in assisting people affected by conflict situations and other human rights violations.

I want to recognize the decision by the Secretary-General and his team regarding the progress made in fulfilling his mandate for reform of the United Nations development system, United Nations management and the peace and security pillar. However, we are deeply concerned about the fact that negligible progress has been made on reforming the Security Council. We also want to recall that in 2000, during the Millennium Summit, world leaders called for a speedy and logical conclusion to the negotiations on Security Council reform. Five years later, at the World Summit, leaders expressed concern at the slow pace of progress and urged that negotiations on Security Council reform be expedited. To date, we are still no closer to agreement on a fundamental issue that seeks to make the United Nations truly representative, democratic and effective.

The year 2019 will mark the fortieth anniversary since reform of the Security Council became an item on the agenda of the General Assembly. The President of the Assembly has been entrusted by world leaders with leading the process of reforming the Security Council. We are therefore hopeful that she will report substantive progress by the time we mark the fortieth anniversary next year. I want to reiterate that Africa remains steadfast and united in its call for two permanent and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council. Not only is that a matter of common decency involving the correction of a historical injustice, it is also a matter of restoring the dignity of Africa, which today remains the only continent without permanent representation on the Council. In that regard, we also support the call for a non-permanent seat for small island developing countries, whose challenges are so unique that it is imperative that their perspective be incorporated as a new dimension into the United Nations approach to international peace and security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): I am once again pleased to be speaking from this rostrum, as I have for several years. I would first like to pay tribute to a worthy son of the African continent, the late Mr Kofi Annan, who passed on just a few weeks ago, having bequeathed to our Organization a legacy of exemplary commitment in the service of peace. I would also like to salute the unquestionable leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, in defending a strong multilateralism buttressed by a reformed United Nations. I also extend my warmest and most sincere congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its current session on her election, a clear recognition of her experience as a diplomat.

During my address to the Assembly at its seventy-second session (see A/72/PV.19), I outlined the internal situation in my country from the security point of view, affirming that thanks to the efforts that have been made, we had succeeded in reversing dangerous trends in the central Democratic Republic of the Congo and significantly improving the situation there, while the outstanding efforts of our defence and security forces in the north-east had enabled us to contain terrorist attacks. Today peace has been consolidated in the centre of the country, demonstrated by how far we have come in reintegrating the families that the deplorable violence had forcibly displaced towards the interior or forced into neighbouring countries.

However, the security challenge in the north-east remains unresolved because of persistent terrorist activities that not only affected the area of Beni on 23 September, but have also been a problem for other countries in the region. In any case, those attacks, which constitute a further challenge to all who are committed to the defence of a free world without mindless violence, will not prevent us from continuing to work for peace and stability for our country and, above all, for the security of the electoral process currently under way.

At the political level, I commended the efforts of the entire political spectrum in the form of a

comprehensive consensus on the electoral process with the ultimate goal of organizing elections. I also mentioned the progress that has been made in particular in creating a voting register and ensuring the imminent publication of the electoral timetable. Despite the enormous challenges that still plague the electoral process at every level, I can now reaffirm, as I did last year, that the timetable for the holding of elections is irreversibly scheduled for the end of this year. The political situation in my country is therefore becoming clearer, with all the electoral timetable deadlines kept so far. Everything will be done to ensure the peaceful and credible nature of the elections, which is evidence of the strengthening of the political and economic stability that the Democratic Republic of the Congo so greatly needs for its emergence from crisis.

"Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies" is the theme of this year's session of the General Assembly. That suggests an uncompromising view of what we want for our Organization and urges every Member State to value its contribution to improving the universal collective. It also urges them to protect the values that make the United Nations a bulwark of solidarity, peace and shared progress in the face of the profound changes that have taken place in the international scene and that have been marked by the emergence of new development hubs and the appearance of new threats, some of which have global repercussions. That once again reinforces the value of shared and engaged reflection on the reform of our Organization with a view to ensuring its improved functioning. However, the effectiveness of our Organization in that new context also depends on its ability to preserve the ideals on which the structure of global equilibrium that emerged in San Francisco more than 70 years ago are based.

We will not be able to make the United Nations an organization for all if we tolerate or allow to become commonplace some Governments' serious interference in matters that clearly fall within the purview of domestic State policy, in violation of the rules that govern our Organization, which represents a grave danger. That is why my country denounces and opposes any interference in the current electoral process, and is determined to finance all of its operational costs. We also demand a return to the fundamentals of democracy and human rights, one of the issues at the root of the asymmetrical diplomacy that some make excessive use of to consciously weaken countries that have resolutely taken a path towards progress. Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo is only 58 years old, and its democracy only 15 years old, we are proud today to share our experience in that area, both in the Human Rights Council and in other regional and international forums. We do it with humility and in a straightforward manner, bearing in mind that the road ahead is still long.

Lastly, we cannot make the United Nations an organization relevant for all people, with a view to achieving sustainable societies, as long as the fauna and flora of countries with extensive forestlands serve only as ornaments — under the well-chosen pretext that they are the lungs of humankind or the repairers of the environmental damage caused by Northern industries — and if there is no real will to allocate substantial rewards for those resources to our populations, or to make good on commitments that are often made but never kept.

Almost 15 years ago, the African continent spoke with one voice in asking that Africa be represented by a permanent member in the Security Council, as part of United Nations reform. Given the myriad changes over many years and for the sake of equity, which is the focus of our meeting here, it is Africa's wish to speak with a louder voice in line with the expectations of its peoples, who demand greater representation within this Organization, which embodies universalism and whose peacekeeping activities primarily concern our continent. Moreover, United Nations forces were deployed in my country 20 years ago, and my Government now reiterates its demand, given the fact that the results at the operational level of the multilateral forces have diminished, that the multilateral force effectively and significantly begin its withdrawal.

Mr. Renzi (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I want to stress the progress made by my country today. Only a few years ago it was mired in bankruptcy, but it is now showing indisputable signs of new ambitions, underscored by encouraging economic and security policies. Our challenges are by no means negligible, but that in no way shakes my faith in a bright future for my country, in which the people understand how to overcome their history and robustly commit to their unity, independence and sovereignty. I would also like to assure the Assembly that the Democratic

Republic of the Congo will always stand by the Organization as long as it remains at our side, as the United Nations embodies in the most concrete terms what our collective efforts can achieve in bringing about peace and the well-being of our planet. It is nevertheless up to Member States to work to achieve a stronger Organization by preserving through their actions the values that inspired its foundation and are unequivocally aimed at the preservation of humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sooronbai Zheenbekov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Sooronbai Zheenbekov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sooronbai Zheenbekov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zheenbekov (*spoke in Kyrgyz; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): Let me warmly welcome everyone on behalf of the freedom-loving, ancient Kyrgyz people, with their thousands of years of history and great mountains. From this lofty rostrum of the United Nations, I would like to draw everyone's attention to the issues that the Kyrgyz Republic believes to be urgent and that require joint solutions at the national, regional and international levels.

(*spoke in Russian*)

On behalf of the Kyrgyz Republic, I would like to salute all participants in the General Assembly at its seventy-third session.

The global political, economic and environmental situation is changing rapidly, and the trend towards regionalism in world politics is increasing. Rising prices, insufficient liquidity and sanctions wars in economies continue. The threat of terrorism and extremism is everywhere. The preservation of an environmental balance has become a global issue for the whole planet. Regardless of their causes, those issues affect every country, especially small ones with open economies. These processes have become sensitive issues for Kyrgyzstan. I therefore believe that today it is extremely timely to discuss in the General Assembly the relevance of the United Nations to all people, as well as the issues of global leadership and mutual responsibility for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. I would like to take this opportunity from the high tribune of the United Nations to outline the issues at the national, regional and global levels that are of relevance to our country.

The peaceful transfer of power in the autumn of 2017 laid a solid foundation for Kyrgyzstan's further progressive democratic development. At present, there is political and social stability in Kyrgyzstan, which provides us with the opportunity to set ambitious goals for the medium term. Kyrgyzstan supports the development of a system of parliamentary democracy in our country, and the upcoming 2020 parliamentary elections will attest to that once again. We firmly believe that parliamentary democracy is best suited to the nature of our society's development.

The fight against corruption remains a priority for the State policy of Kyrgyzstan. As of today, we are facing the issues of the political modernization and economic development that the future will require of us.

First of all, we are focusing on implementing judicial and legal reforms and reorganizing our law-enforcement agencies. The sustainable development of every region of Kyrgyzstan is key to successful development and is our most urgent issue. We have set ourselves the goal of improving the climate for investment and have begun building an information society with a fair and transparent public administration. Kyrgyzstan will continue to consistently strengthen democratic principles in developing the State. Our public administration is focused on the needs of all individuals and on ensuring their rights, freedoms and justice in society.

All of these medium- and long-term reforms are included in Kyrgyzstan's 2040 national development strategy. The long-term provisions of our national development strategy meet all of the

requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in that connection, we hope for further support from the United Nations and partner countries for Kyrgyzstan's development efforts. Kyrgyzstan remains committed to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We consider strengthening the entire spectrum of cooperation among the countries of Central Asia a crucial factor in ensuring the security not only of the region but of the world. We are pleased to note that our cooperation has gained positive momentum and reached a fundamentally new level. The meetings of the Heads of State and Foreign Ministers of the countries of Central Asia have become a tradition.

For the Kyrgyz Republic, the issue of water use is extremely important. The ways that water and energy resources have been used in recent decades in Central Asia show how essential it is to develop new approaches. We believe that the integrated use of water and energy resources in the region should be determined by a system of measures aimed at achieving the sustainable development of all Central Asian States. Kyrgyzstan has therefore consistently advocated for the development and implementation in Central Asia of mutually beneficial economic mechanisms in the area. Cooperation and multilateral dialogue are considered by the Kyrgyz Republic as the only way to solve existing challenges. In that context, we also see a special role and a new mission for regional organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union. Ending isolationist policies and developing the cooperation and partnership have become very important today.

No State is immune to threats related to terrorism and extremism. The members of the international community must work together more actively to combat this evil and problems such as drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and weapons, money-laundering and the financing of terrorism. That is very important to us, as we are located at a crossroads of drug-trafficking networks. Regrettably, the measures taken by the international community are still insufficient. It is important to pay special attention to solving this general problem for the region. Kyrgyzstan reaffirms its commitment to the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and supports the Joint Action Plan. It is essential to coordinate the efforts of the States of the region on issues related to security, improved cooperation and the exchange of operating information. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic has approved a programme for combating extremism and terrorism up to 2022. I thank the United Nations for its financial and technical assistance in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, and we hope for further support from development partners for security-related issues.

The move towards sustainable development means restoring our natural ecosystems and the environment. Kyrgyzstan recognizes climate change as an existential threat to ecosystems and people. We committed to counteracting that global threat by signing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Climate change is having an ever-increasing impact on our glaciers and water resources and contributing to the increase in natural disasters in our mountainous regions. Those are the main topics of the fourth World Mountain Forum in Kyrgyzstan, held to discuss new paths to development ensuring a prosperous future for mountain regions.

The main environment-related issue in our region continues to be the legacy of the radioactive materials industry of the Soviet era — that is, uranium tailings. Kyrgyzstan has held a number of international conferences in an effort to find solutions to it. We held an event at the United Nations on 27 September dedicated to the dangers of uranium mining. With the aim of reaching a new stage in action for reclaiming uranium tailings, Kyrgyzstan is taking the initiative to update resolution 68/218 on the role of the international community in averting the radiation threat in Central Asia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our development partners for providing significant support to my country in solving this problem.

The issues I have noted require the joint efforts of all States and of global and regional institutions. There is a growing need to create fundamentally new international mechanisms, adequate to modern challenges and threats. Our Organization needs changes to meet the demands of the times and current realities. Its reforms should be based on the principles of universality, broad geographical representation and the widest possible support of the States Members of the United Nations. Kyrgyzstan seeks to contribute its fair share of contributions to the common cause of the United Nations for peace, global security and sustainable development.

In order to draw the attention of the United Nations and the world to the problem of small States, Kyrgyzstan has put forward its candidacy for a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period from 2027 to 2028. The support of countries that have never had a seat on the Council will increase confidence in the equality of its members and thereby raise and strengthen the authority and credibility of the Organization. Kyrgyzstan considers the United Nations to be an authoritative and universal international organization.

It should be emphasized that an important factor in preserving peace, stability and the development of cultural diversity and tolerance is the deepening of intercultural dialogue. That was brilliantly described in the works of our distinguished and world-renowned writer Chingiz Aitmatov. He made a significant contribution to building peace and cultural exchange among different peoples. This year, Kyrgyzstan and the whole world are celebrating the ninetieth anniversary of the birth of Chingiz Aitmatov.

The initiative of Kyrgyzstan to hold the World Nomad Games on a regular basis has been recognized and supported by the General Assembly. The Games have shown that, despite the complexities and contradictions of the modern world, the peoples of the world strive for unity and creativity.

(*spoke in Kyrgyz*)

Our nation considers independence to be its greatest achievement, and it has found its worthy place in the world community. Kyrgyzstan has been recognized as a sovereign State in the international arena. As Chingiz Aitmatov, the great son of the Kyrgyz people and a famous writer, philosopher and humanist said, "There is no greater wealth for man than to live together and in peace".

Only unity and harmony will save the world. The unity of the people is the main guarantor of the sustainable development of our country. Inter-ethnic friendship in society and the responsible attitude of all citizens to their country's destiny are the foundations of success. The independence of Kyrgyzstan and the unity of its people are our future and happiness. May God grant his mercy to the people of Kyrgyzstan and let peace reign in our land. I wish every citizen of the country health, good fortune, and a happy and peaceful life. Long live our independent Kyrgyzstan.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sooronbai Zheenbekov, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Barrow: All praise is due to the Almighty Allah for granting us the favour of gathering in the Assembly once again to discuss and advance our common global agenda. Please allow me to begin by sincerely thanking His Excellency Mr. Miroslav Lajčák for the excellent manner in which he presided over the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. By the same token, I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I assure her that as one of her Vice-Presidents, the Gambia pledges its full support and cooperation during her tenure of office.

The theme of the seventy-third session, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", is indeed very relevant to today's global affairs. By implication, the pursuit of the mission of the United Nations for peace, development and human rights also remains as relevant today as it was in 1945, when it was adopted in response to the horrific experiences and destruction during that tragic era. Amid the complex multilateral challenges that continue to confront us globally, no country can thrive or solve all of the challenges it faces in isolation. As human beings, our salvation lies in strengthening our multilateral institutions and fostering greater

international cooperation in order to collectively address global challenges. The United Nations provides a unique opportunity to achieve that goal.

It is apparent that in order to make real progress, effective global leadership is imperative. As leaders, we must therefore all shoulder our responsibilities as best we can. That should compel us to support and invest more in the United Nations, instead of withdrawing our participation or cutting back our financial support. It is ironic that at a time when multiple global challenges are emerging and mounting, support for the work of the United Nations is being undermined through inadequate funding. Those of us who value the United Nations, as well as those who have benefited immensely from its work, should be at the forefront in calling on all Member States to step up support for the Organization. Indeed, the United Nations must play a lead role in solving global challenges, and our task is to ensure that it has the required capacity, influence and effectiveness.

Decisions and actions rooted in a rules-based international system that is underpinned by multilateral agreements and processes form the basis for the successful conduct of relations between and among nations. Let us therefore restore faith in our rules-based international order, so as to remain relevant and collectively make progress on our global agenda, ranging from tackling the menaces of climate change and terrorism to addressing disarmament, trade, development and other issues of concern to humankind. I am confident that it is only through effective global leadership and international cooperation that the well-being of all of the world's citizens can be achieved. As leaders, we have the shared responsibility to promote a world order that prioritizes peace over insecurity, eliminates the growing inequalities around the world and brings us sustainable development.

With reference to the Gambia and following a difficult political impasse in December 2016, Gambians have managed, with the support of our partners, to restore democracy and the rule of law in our country. We have completed our national electoral process in full, after successfully conducting both legislative and local Government elections. We are also resolutely pursuing institutional and constitutional reforms. Such reforms have commenced, with the hope of putting the Gambia on a solid path to becoming a shining champion of democracy and human rights in the world.

When Gambians voted for change in 2016, they were yearning to be in charge of their destiny. They wanted significant, not cosmetic, improvements in their lives. It is for that reason that my Government is now implementing a comprehensive national development plan for the period 2018-2021. The plan seeks to transform the Gambia through key priorities, such as infrastructure development, agricultural transformation, macroeconomic stability, job creation and employment. The plan also seeks to consolidate our democratic gains through good governance, the rule of law and respect for human and people's rights. In all, our goal is to deliver a fully transformed Gambia that has a future, a country that is energy secure, food-self-sufficient and investment-friendly. We have also begun to exploit and harness the benefits of information and communication technology as a catalyst for modernization and youth empowerment.

Our national development plan was presented to a successful donor conference in Brussels, where significant pledges were made to help us meet our funding targets. I want to once again express our profound thanks to our bilateral and multilateral partners, including the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and many others, for their interest and support. We are indeed truly grateful, as we look forward to their continued collaboration and support for our efforts to attain our development objectives. The national development plan will continue to be implemented through the partnerships and solidarity built at the Brussels meeting. Quite deliberately, the plan is consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the African Union's Agenda 2063.

In our pursuit of a fully transformed Gambia, we recognize the importance of meaningful engagement with the Gambian diaspora, fondly referred to as the eighth region of the Gambia. Our diaspora strategy seeks to explore and utilize the skills, talents and resources of Gambians everywhere for the successful implementation of our national development plan.

The Gambia's experience demonstrates that democracy yields amazing dividends. Remarkably, we have noticed a decrease in the number of young people attempting to undertake dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean to Europe. The average Gambian is willing to stay in the country and contribute to national development. Despite those positive developments, I strongly urge that interventions to curb youth migration

be supported through incentives to young people to stay in their country. In that regard, we look forward to the high-level conference in Marrakech in December aimed at adopting the new global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration. Better educational and job opportunities must be harnessed for young people in order to inspire them and give them hope in life. In that regard, my Government stands ready to work collaboratively with the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and other regional blocs to devise and implement suitable strategies and interventions.

As a member of the Sahel region, the Gambia fully supports the implementation of the new United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, anchored in the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. We are optimistic that it will contribute significantly to addressing the challenges of development in the Sahel, as well as to fostering peace, security and cross-border relations. We are particularly excited that the new strategy views the Sahel as a land of opportunity and not of hopelessness. Given that fact, we envisage that it will yield important dividends for Africa, especially with regard to the maintenance of peace and security and the elimination of terrorism in the region. Strategically, we must disrupt all criminal networks and the financing of criminal sales of organs and body parts, using better information-sharing and cross-border security initiatives.

As we battle those negative forces and try to fulfil our aspirations of silencing the guns on the African continent by 2020, we are worried about the state of United Nations peacekeeping missions in some of our trouble spots, especially in view of the drastic cuts to the peacekeeping budget. The lack of the critical resources needed to support peacekeeping is quite worrisome. The Gambia supports the introduction of appropriate reforms to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations for both peacebuilding and peacekeeping, and they should be reconsidered and maintained as important priorities on the Organization's agenda. My Government proposes that we do a better job of protecting the lives not only of innocent civilians but also of the men and women who constitute the peacekeepers. At this juncture, I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the gallant peacekeepers who have fallen. We call on our partners to rise to the challenge and stop the prolongation of conflicts, and we therefore support the Secretary-General's agenda for reform.

As Africans, we must assume leadership for maintaining peace and security in our continent. In that respect, I commend the leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea for the extraordinary efforts they have made to bring lasting peace to the Horn of Africa, setting an example for the rest of the continent to emulate. Similarly, I applaud the leaders of South Sudan for agreeing to restore peace and work towards developing their country. We call on the leaders of Libya and the Central African Republic to intensify their efforts through political dialogue for national reconciliation and peace.

My Government reaffirms its strong support for a two-State solution to establish peace between the Palestinians and their neighbours. We also unconditionally recognize the One China policy. Similarly, we recognize the support provided by the Government and the people of Bangladesh to address the plight of the Rohingya Muslims. As the upcoming Chair of the next summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Gambia has undertaken, through a resolution, to champion an accountability mechanism that would ensure that perpetrators of the terrible crimes against the Rohingya Muslims are brought to book.

Mr. Bessho (Japan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

While it is our strong desire to see reform that enables the Secretary-General to operate effectively, it is equally expected that the reforms also facilitate the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Reform of the Security Council is long overdue. I want to remind the Assembly that the process truly reflects all interests and positions represented in the intergovernmental negotiations. We are convinced that Africa's voice should be fully represented on the Security Council.

My delegation looks forward to a successful seventy-third session, and we hope that the President's election will strengthen efforts aimed at highlighting the plight of rural women and girls.

Before I conclude, let me express our sincere condolences to the family of the late former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan was a formidable voice on everything, including reform of the United Nations. He stood for a just world and was a passionate advocate of good governance and fundamental freedoms. Kofi Annan will surely be greatly missed.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Ms. Hilda Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Ms. Hilda Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Hilda Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Heine: I have the honour to bring the Assembly warm greetings of *yokwe* on behalf of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In its best moments, the United Nations has served as a common platform for every nation, but especially the most vulnerable. Today nations are pulling in new directions, stretching the threads that hold us all together and pushing the world to the edge. It is imperative that the States Members of the United Nations continue to unite behind an international rules-based order that does not overlook the voices of the most vulnerable peoples. As a former United Nations strategic trusteeship, the Marshall Islands can speak with authority from its own history of the times when the sheer will of the most powerful ravaged our shores and when the common concerns of humankind failed us, as well as those times when it ensured that our Marshallese voices mattered. We welcome engagement with the world's largest Powers but they must have our best interests at heart.

Human rights stand as a challenging universal ideal that all must aspire to and uphold. The Human Rights Council has tremendous potential to provide transparency and dialogue and foster progress. While we must take more time to carefully connect global norms and national implementation, because one size never fits all, the United Nations must never hesitate to stand up to actors who seek to evade what everyone else might see as common decency. And that is not an abstract statement. From our own history and contemporary challenges, the Marshall Islands knows the dire consequences that arise when the international community looks the other way because of political expediency. Far more political will is needed to truly ensure that no one is left behind. Whatever the shortcomings of the Human Rights Council, it is the responsibility of Member States to address. We must fix it ourselves. We will not stand by in silence.

For those reasons, the Republic of the Marshall Islands has put forward its candidacy for the Human Rights Council for the term from 2020 to 2022. Real commitment is in actions, not in words. As an example, we have not only enacted disability rights legislation to meet our treaty obligations, we currently have a bill before Parliament that amends more than 100 existing statutes to ensure that we mainstream rights across all sectors. We are moving towards a similar undertaking on the issue of gender. Our partners, including the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, have already been key sources of assistance, but it is our political will that can make it a reality. Human rights are not just treaty signatures; they are a visible step-change in our local communities.

Small nations can have a unique role within the multilateral system. We would not have the United Nations Law of the Sea, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or a great many other outcomes but for the political will of small island developing States (SIDs). We represent a quarter of this body's membership, but does the United Nations system invest equally in us? We will struggle to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals unless there is urgent attention to putting our own data capacity to use from the international system. Many of our core social development indicators sit stagnant. While we are trying to change all of this, we cannot do so without an international system that is directly focused on our unique character.

I strongly support the Secretary-General's initiative for United Nations system reform — to do more and do it better, with the resources at hand. Our present United Nations Resident Coordinator is not a resident at all and faces the impossible task of effectively serving 10 remote nations at once. I look forward to the upcoming review of the United Nations multi-country offices, mandated in resolution 72/279, and urge innovative solutions.

This year is a key opportunity for the United Nations system to make the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway for small island developing States a real opportunity for system change.

Decades ago, small island developing States warned the world of the risks of climate change, and those are still radical threats. Now we must spend time on advocacy. It is time that we literally do not have. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change stands strong as a powerful and united legal commitment on the part of all — the largest and smallest among us — to sparing no effort in doing more to ensure a rise in average temperatures of no more than 1.5° C. I strongly support the Secretary-General's forthcoming 2019 climate summit. It is an opportunity at the highest levels for leaders to reshape headlines and put the Paris Agreement into motion by responding to the urgent needs for enhanced action and ambition at true scale. It is not just a moral promise, but an economic reality, as energy markets already point to better choices.

I am not asking others to do things that we will not do at home. This week, I announced that the Marshall Islands is transitioning to a net-zero emissions target by 2050. We are already taking action, not only to meet that goal but also to increase our near-term ambitions and accelerate adaptation efforts. In raising our ambitions, I know we will not be alone. The Pacific Islands Forum leaders, in last month's Boe Declaration, declared climate change to be the single greatest security threat to our region. That political will must extend to urgent and prioritized assistance to help atoll nations such as the Marshall Islands, whose very survival is at risk, to adapt to the climate-driven threats we already face and prevent a future tipping point only a decade or two away. Much more political effort is needed on scaling and targeting climate finance so that good intentions from partners can make a visible impact in local communities.

As a low-lying atoll island nation little more than one metre above sea level, the Marshall Islands have a future that hangs in the balance, but that is not the case for us alone. Although as an atoll nation we are the most vulnerable, we are joined not only by other small island developing States but by many other countries that face serious challenges posed by climate impacts. As Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, I call on every leader in the world to join me on 22 November in an online virtual summit to ensure that no one and no country is left behind.

The Marshall Islands emerged from the colonial period, the Second World War and the effects of nuclear testing conducted more than six decades ago. As we were adopting our Constitution in 1979 and becoming a State Member of the United Nations in 1991, we were focused entirely on building a nation to leave behind for our children. Only 27 years later, now facing the consequences of climate change, we are asking ourselves what legacy we as a nation will leave for our grandchildren to inherit.

Last year's United Nations Ocean Conference set the stage to ensure that the oceans, which cover two thirds of the world's surface, must no longer be an isolated silo but must become an integral part of sustainable development and global commitment. The Marshall Islands is more than 99 per cent ocean. It is our culture, our primary economic pathway and our identity. The world must move far beyond words and towards actions because we should all be gravely alarmed at what has too often become a downward spiral.

Earlier this year, the eight Pacific leaders of the parties to the Nauru Agreement Concerning Cooperation in the Management of Fisheries of Common Interest met in the Marshall Islands, the first such leaders' meeting since 2010. In the intervening years, we have rewritten the playbook for global tuna markets, working to ensure that ours will not only be an economic lifeline for our future generations but will also remain a valuable source of global food security and the world's largest sustainable purse-seine tuna fishery.

In that regard, I welcome the outreach and engagement of the Group of Seven leaders, under the leadership of Canada, to focus on oceans and fisheries. International development finance sources must improve targeted delivery and direct support. Marine plastic pollution is crippling global waters, and illegal fishing in the Pacific is more than a violation of law and treaty, it is a major regional security issue. Next week, the Marshall Islands will host the launching of a regional initiative for a Pacific region free of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in order to eradicate illegal fishing from our region once and for all. Enhanced efforts on illegal fishing are needed from regional fisheries management organizations, and we should not be afraid to name and shame the worst offenders.

As the first woman Head of State or Government in the independent Pacific islands region, I say that

it is vital that the United Nations accelerate efforts to ensure that all women, and especially our youngest generations, must see that they have a rightful role at all levels of decision-making, including the highest levels of political leadership and economic development. After all, we women represent the half of the world's population that is not yet fully reflected among the ranks of global leaders.

For too many years, multilateral discussions to end nuclear weapons have gone in circles. I strongly welcome progress whenever it is found and remain cautiously optimistic of efforts towards a safe and secure Korean peninsula, with complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. However, until that is achieved, the Marshall Islands strongly affirms its commitment to the full implementation of the Security Council's sanctions, including in the maritime sector.

Threats of atmospheric testing in the Pacific Ocean are of obvious concern to me and my fellow Pacific island leaders, and for every Marshallese citizen, the effects of nuclear testing are not only a historical legacy, but a contemporary reality. Those were the only instances where the United Nations ever explicitly authorized the testing of nuclear weapons, and the consequences have been horrific. The 67 nuclear weapons tests conducted between 1946 and 1958 have affected multiple generations.

Those tests took place at a time when we held status as a United Nations strategic trust territory, including testing that was authorized by United Nations Trusteeship Council resolutions 1082 (XIV) and 1493 (XVII). That is a burden that no other nation or people should ever bear. That is not only a lesson that the world must learn from, but a situation where the United Nations has already offered its assistance. My Government recently established a national nuclear commission to work carefully with affected local communities and regional and international agencies to better elaborate our complex issues and develop a strategy for nuclear justice. It is vital that we make every possible effort, with all possible speed, to help us address human rights issues and the environment of our affected people.

The Security Council and the United Nations as a whole must adapt and change. This is not the world of seven decades ago. It is important to realize Security Council reform and launch text-based negotiations for Security Council reform during this session of the General Assembly.

Decolonization and human rights are both important issues in the Pacific islands region. I strongly affirm the position of the Pacific Island Forum leaders in recognizing the constructive engagement of Forum countries with Indonesia with respect to elections and human rights issues in West Papua, and the commitment to continuing dialogue in an open and constructive manner.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands supports the recognition of Taiwan's meaningful participation within the United Nations system, including programmes and agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The people of Taiwan deserve equal treatment, and the United Nations should resolve the serious issue of the exclusion of Taiwan's 23 million people from the United Nations system, an issue that we believe is not addressed in resolution 2758 (XXVI).

Taiwan has been implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and has released a voluntary national review. It has the capacity to contribute to a wide range of United Nations programmes that are relevant to global progress. Diseases such as tuberculosis know no boundaries, and Taiwan has brought its policy framework in line with global efforts. Taiwan has served as a primary partner of my own nation in addressing non-communicable diseases, which are now at crisis levels. Blocking Taiwan's participation does not benefit global human welfare.

In conclusion, it is imperative that, as truly united nations, we take to heart the national motto of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, *Jepilpin ke Ejukaan*, which translates as "accomplishment through joint effort". What we do as leaders at the United Nations and beyond is a legacy for the next generation and those that follow.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Hilda Heine, President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Medina Sánchez (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly and to wish her every possible success. It is a great honour for me to be able to once again address the Assembly as President of the Dominican Republic. This is a special occasion for our country, because next year the Dominican Republic will sit on the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the first time.

On behalf of the Dominican people and myself, I would therefore like to start by thanking the States Members of the United Nations for the support we have received in joining the Security Council. In particular, I thank the members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for the trust placed in us. Our purpose during our term will be to contribute a voice for Latin America and the Caribbean to one of the forums for greater global responsibility in the maintenance of peace.

Of course, we are committed to asserting, both in the Security Council and in the Assembly, the same unbreakable principles that guide us as a nation. Respect for human rights, democracy, freedom and diversity will therefore be the beacon that we will follow in order to guide our work in the Security Council. We will do everything possible to honour the trust placed in us, being fully aware that, although fragile, stability and security are priority objectives that must be preserved and progress made towards, step by step and day by day.

It is clear to us that in a space that addresses issues that can change the course of history and the fate of millions of people, we cannot seek easy and drastic solutions, which in any case do not exist. In that context, our country will always be a place of dialogue and understanding, and will always seek peaceful solutions. We are always willing to do whatever it takes to find common ground and support consensus as the best tool for peace and development. We will therefore always promote rapprochement among peoples through mediation and democratic dialogue, opening spaces for a future of shared peace.

Since its founding more than seven decades ago, the United Nations has played a central role in creating a more stable and secure world for human beings across the globe. However, we can never consider stability a definitive achievement. We cannot lower our guard when we know, for example, that in our Latin American and Caribbean region alone, 35 per cent of the population belongs to the so-called vulnerable class and could therefore fall back into poverty when faced with any setback.

By the same token, it is fair to recognize that like so many other things, security is not well distributed. We all know that there are territories in the Americas and in many other places around the world where the prospect of living peacefully and without fear is an almost utopian vision, due to the control that organized crime exercises in those territories.

What can we do, then, to make this a more stable world? What measures can we implement to ensure that security is not solely the asset of a select few countries, but one that extends throughout the world and reaches every neighbourhood and village? Of course, I am not the only one asking those questions — everyone here has asked them at some point — nor will I give definitive answers, which can be formulated and found only by working together. What I will do is briefly mention what I consider two of the main threats to global stability and security. I am referring to climate change and drug trafficking and organized crime.

At first glance, they may seem very different from each other, but their complexity and global scope makes them two of the main challenges facing humankind. In both cases, the consequences are the destruction of thousands of families, collateral damage to all aspects of human development and the overwhelming of States by the magnitude of the challenges they face.

Let us start by talking about the consequences of natural disasters, which are occurring more and more frequently. We only have to open the newspaper or turn on the television to see the effects of climate change wreaking havoc somewhere on the planet. From the

typhoon that recently hit the Philippines, the strongest in decades, to the hurricane seasons that punish the Caribbean islands with increasing ferocity, no corner of the world is safe. Last year we saw Hurricane Irma leave Havana totally flooded, and it took many weeks for things to return to normal. Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda and other Caribbean islands, it has taken months to recover from the effects of Hurricane Maria, which not only brought about economic losses but also claimed a considerable number of human lives.

In the Dominican Republic, we are strongly committed to dealing with the consequences of climate change. That means that we are working simultaneously on three levels of action, local, national and international. It is at the local level where people's daily lives develop. It is there that tragedies take on a painful reality and where the work of building, preparing and raising awareness must begin.

It is at the local and national levels where our Government has a greater capacity to act and where we are improving resilience and relocating the communities that live around our most significant watersheds, which are highly vulnerable to meteorological events. We are also doing a great deal of public awareness work and training thousands of teachers and technicians to promote sustainable development in their schools and communities.

Then there is the national level, where we are also working tirelessly, both on our rapid-response strategies and in the field of prevention. For instance, we are planting millions of trees across our country and investing more than ever before in renewable energy. Those measures will not only support our economy, they will enable us to reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases by 25 per cent by 2030, a goal that we are very pleased about.

However, the fight against climate change is a task for all of us, and that is why the next level — the international level — is the broadest and most essential of the three. If there is no political will in this area, most of our efforts will come to nothing and will have a negative impact on all the progress we have made at the local and national levels. That is why I would like to reiterate once again before the Assembly the importance of going beyond good intentions and focusing on concrete actions.

Among those actions, I want to once again highlight the urgency of financing and making operational initiatives such as the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts, which will make it possible to compensate for the destruction of infrastructure and ecosystems and alleviate the threatening conditions of our residents. That fund is essential to ensuring that natural disasters do not destroy in a few hours what many nations have spent decades building.

I will give one example, on the understanding that our case is not the most tragic in the Caribbean region. Last year, the storms Olga and Maria spelled the destruction of more than $1 billion worth of infrastructure. Imagine what that means for a country whose annual State budget is already limited. Above all, the Warsaw fund will help protect the valuable lives of millions of human beings, bringing them peace of mind for their homes and granting them a future without a constant uncertain feeling of threat every time they see that rain is coming. We therefore consider it indisputable that those countries that have most heavily contributed to the gas emissions that are responsible for climate change are also those that should contribute proportionally to the fund established to mitigate its effects.

As I described earlier, we also consider drug trafficking and organized crime to be a threat to global security and stability of a similar magnitude to that of climate change. The trafficking of illicit substances claims thousands of lives every year, particularly of young people, who are extremely valuable to our countries. As if that were not bad enough, drug trafficking also permeates our institutions, unbalances our economies, threatens our values and brings nothing but degradation and destruction to our social fabric. Wherever organized crime prevails, the security and peace of our peoples always deteriorate over time. As with climate change, therefore, the fight against drugs must be conducted at all three levels — local, national and international — in order to achieve effective results.

In the case of our country, local intervention is focused on prevention campaigns and educating our young people by supporting them with training and entrepreneurial opportunities, while also improving the neighbourhoods where they live and recovering public spaces for people to use. We do all of that with the aim of saving the most vulnerable populations from criminal networks.

At the national level, our security forces and national drug control directorate are working all over the country as part of a comprehensive plan to strengthen our actions against drug trafficking. Among other initiatives, we are acquiring new, high-tech equipment and strengthening security at our ports and airports with more agents and security checks, as well as carrying out in-depth interventions in areas with the highest incidence of crime. In parallel, we have moved forward with the enactment of a law against money-laundering and the financing of terrorism, based on the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, with an emphasis on preventing and combating money-laundering, which drug traffickers use to ensure the profitability of their activities.

Finally, at the international level, we have bilateral and multilateral agreements in place with the United States, the European Union and the countries of the Central American Integration System, as well as participating in the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, all with the objective of coordinating efforts and improving our efficiency in combating drug trafficking and organized crime. Thanks to such initiatives, we are better prepared to fight together against that evil, which threatens the integrity of our economies and our democracies. However, we must emphasize the need for greater international coordination.

We can make great strides forward if we join our efforts, share information and support each other in our work. We also understand that showing greater commitment is the responsibility of countries that due to their domestic demand for narcotics, have set in motion the international machinery of drug trafficking and organized crime. We cannot ignore the fact that it is the developing States that act as the first barrier in containing drug trafficking, thereby protecting the most developed countries.

Our countries allocate billions of dollars each year to fulfilling that role, but it is never enough in the face of the huge resources deployed by organized crime networks. That is undoubtedly a key factor in the social disintegration that many of our countries are dealing with. As in the case of climate change, it is the more developed countries with greater consumption capacity that must dedicate more resources, cooperation and political will if they truly wish to fight the problem with any hope of victory.

In combating the effects of drug trafficking and climate change, we will address some of the structural causes of deeper poverty and social inequality. If the United Nations and the developed countries want to help fight poverty more comprehensively and openly, those two fronts are an intelligent, humane and cost-effective way to do so. We once again appeal to those countries from this rostrum to show the responsibility and solidarity we need to make our planet a safer place.

Climate change, drug trafficking, poverty, social inequality and mass migration are all interrelated problems that we must deal with urgently. As we have pointed out today, the best and perhaps only way to do that is to act at all levels of response to the problem, so that the agreements we sign in a forum like the United Nations have a real impact on the lives of the people, and so that the needs of our peoples are articulated in their national and international institutions.

We must therefore all continue to act according to our capacities, without hesitation and with the same objective of creating a world that is increasingly stable, secure and developed, a world in which all men and women can carry forward their life dreams. That is the ultimate goal that the Dominican Republic will continue to work for. We will do it in our towns, neighbourhoods and all of our cities; with our immediate neighbours and with all members of the General Assembly; and in the Security Council next year, in the new role that we will be honoured to assume.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Dominican Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Danilo Medina Sánchez, President of the Dominican Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bakir Izetbegović,

Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Izetbegović: It is my honour to address the Assembly for the fourth and final time as the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his leadership of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. He worked tirelessly together with Secretary-General Guterres to make the Organization more effective. I am glad that the agenda for this year's session will maintain a focus on those efforts.

I congratulate Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election. The fact that she is only the fourth woman to hold the presidency of the General Assembly since 1946 is a reminder that gender equality and the empowerment of women must remain our top priority.

Two years ago, from this rostrum (see A/71/PV.12), I reflected on a number of ways and means to make our world more just and prosperous for all. Standing here today, I do not see much to rejoice about in terms of the progress we have made. Challenges have continued to multiply uncontrollably. Old conflicts have been magnified and new ones created. When compared to the past three decades, more countries are now engulfed in crises that are more violent and disruptive and result in ever greater divides. Those modern crises and conflicts are rarely confined to their place of origin. They shake entire regions and often proliferate further into the transnational arena.

Record numbers of civilians are victims of indiscriminate yet deliberate armed attacks. Many more are subjected to persecution, discrimination, marginalization and violations of basic human rights. Many others fall victim to natural disasters. The number of refugees, displaced persons and those in dire need of humanitarian assistance continues to rise.

It is through that lens that I want to reflect on three issues that are critical to addressing the global problems that we face — multilateralism, international law and the rules-based international order. I believe that adherence to multilateralism, compliance with international law and shared commitment to the rules-based global order is our only hope and the only way to resolve the complex challenges that confront us.

Whether it be conflict prevention or resolution, security, development, climate change, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, migration or human rights, none of these problems can be successfully addressed or resolved by one, three or five countries alone. Each and every one of those issues has transnational dimensions. Effective responses require an exercise in responsibility and respect for agreed international norms and standards, strong coalitions based on mutual trust, and progressive, inclusive and democratic vision and leadership that embrace a new understanding of national sovereignty.

Yet today we are witnessing severe attacks on the rules-based international order and the purposes, principles and norms of international law, which threaten to seriously undermine international peace and security. There are plenty of examples in our recent past that show what disregard for international law and the rules-based international order can bring. Those dark chapters of our history were a direct result of the community of nations failing to uphold the rules and norms on which our world order has been based when those very same rules and norms were challenged.

Our citizens want to live in a peaceful world in which human dignity is respected and fundamental human rights and freedoms are protected. That is the raison d'être of the Organization. That obligation goes far beyond our national borders or interests. No Government can focus only on delivering stability and prosperity to its own people while ignoring what goes on beyond its national borders, in its neighbourhood and in the wider world. To paraphrase Franklin Roosevelt, the structure for meeting any of the numerous challenges we face, including building and sustaining world peace, cannot be the work of one man or one nation large or small, but must be the cooperative effort of the whole world. Those words resonate today in the same way they did over seven decades ago.

Cooperative approaches have been key to eliminating smallpox, vaccinating record numbers of infants against preventable diseases and beating back the menace of AIDS. Concerted efforts and the alliance of all nations are necessary to contain the risks of nuclear confrontation and successfully address global issues such as gender equality, climate change or the prosecution of war criminals at the international level. The spirit of multilateralism is essential in order to achieve and maintain peace, security and development around the world. A man who championed multilateralism in his lifelong work on the world stage, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, once said:

> "More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together. And that ... is why we have the United Nations."

We must reaffirm this Organization of unified nations as the true embodiment of multilateralism. It is the only forum that brings together almost 200 countries to seek joint solutions to global problems that affect us all. It is the only forum that has the capacity, dedication and compassion to solve those problems. It is the only forum where the voices of both big and small countries can be heard equally, even if all of those voices are not always equally acknowledged. Bosnia and Herzegovina is strongly committed to the preservation and strengthening of the United Nations, its values and principles, its missions and mandates, and its relevance, credibility and cohesion.

Time and again, we must remind ourselves of the fundamental values and principles that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and that embody the essence of the rules-based international order. Those principles and values remain as relevant today as they were in 1945. The primary responsibility of the Organization and all its States Members is to uphold and protect those commitments in the face of the modern challenges that profoundly test them.

The strong leadership and engagement of the United Nations, in particular its Security Council, in line with the norms of international law, are indispensable in situations such as those in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq and Libya, and in other crisis areas. Yet our responses to modern crises and conflicts have unfortunately been marked by a disregard for international law, departures from multilateralism and a failure to adhere to the rules-based international order, by inaction and indifference to human suffering and violations of basic human rights.

Let us look at the Middle East, for example. The conflict in Syria has entered its eighth year, and we are nowhere close to bringing it to a resolution. Some of the most sustained violations of international humanitarian law in modern times, including the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons, have gone unabated. Civilian casualties are constantly on the rise. The humanitarian situation keeps deteriorating.

The same applies to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for more than half a century and brought about immense human suffering. Holding a region hostage, as individual national interests compromise the interests of civilians who are caught in endless cycles of violence, is unacceptable.

Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to support multilateral efforts to find solutions that will bring sustained peace and stability to the Syrian people and meet the legitimate expectations of both the Israelis and Palestinians of having two democratic States, living side by side within secure and recognized borders, in line with international law. As much as finding such solutions is a political question, it is also a matter of our common humanity.

Our shared ambition to leave no one behind is also put at serious risk by the evolving threat of radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism. That modern scourge easily finds fuel to sustain it not only in armed conflicts but also in social and political injustices, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, poverty, unemployment and economic disadvantage.

Violent extremism and terrorism transcend physical and virtual borders. They constantly change tactics and invent new ways and means to spread. Extremists and terrorists remain intent on driving a wedge between and within societies, hindering our efforts to maintain peace and security, protect human rights and foster sustainable development. Our response must therefore be decisive, coherent, comprehensive and grounded in the international counter-terrorism framework that we have created. Bosnia and Herzegovina remains strongly committed to contributing to global efforts to counter and eradicate that modern menace in all its forms and manifestations. This is a profound challenge of our time that needs to be confronted at every step and by every means at our disposal.

The United Nations peacebuilding architecture remains as important as ever in addressing all the challenges that persist on the path towards sustainable peace around the world. We recognize the value of introducing the United Nations peacebuilding efforts at an early stage, alongside peacekeeping activities. Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the vision and efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to mainstream conflict prevention and peacebuilding as priorities of the United Nations.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is proud of its contribution to those goals through our participation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Cyprus, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and Mali. We have joined more than 130 other countries and organizations in endorsing the Secretary-General's Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. We support his efforts to make the United Nations peacekeeping missions stronger and more effective.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the most powerful connector among the various pillars of the United Nations work. Its implementation is the most important pathway to global peace, security and prosperity. It will help States and societies establish resilient institutions that are able to detect, manage and absorb tensions; address and eliminate the root causes of conflicts and prevent their recurrence and create conditions for inclusive and sustainable development by reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination, ensuring respect for human rights and combating environmental degradation. The 2030 Agenda is a catalyst for sustainable and inclusive development rooted in respect for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. We believe that it is the best way to prevent conflicts and instability.

Strong global and regional cooperation, whether on matters of conflict prevention and resolution, the fight against terrorism or the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, is essential to the success of all those efforts. Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly values the cooperation we have established within our region of the Western Balkans. We remain committed to advancing that cooperation, including on our joint path towards membership in the European Union.

Bosnia and Herzegovina strives for the protection and promotion of values and principles that are shared by all countries. We believe that the ideals, values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and standards inscribed in international law should never be violated or disregarded. We believe that it is the obligation of all countries — big and small, powerful or less powerful — to uphold the noble values and principles on which the Organization is built. If any of us lacks the will to uphold those values and principles, then all our endeavours will be less valuable and less successful.

On that note, I leave the Assembly with the words of a great man, Nelson Mandela, as we mark the centenary of his birth,

> "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bakir Izetbegović, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nyusi (*spoke in Portuguese; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I have the great honour to address the General Assembly in the general debate of its seventy-third session.

We warmly salute Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés and congratulate her on her election to preside over this session of the General Assembly, which is meeting under the theme "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies". We assure her of the full support of Mozambique as she discharges her mandate.

We congratulate the outgoing President, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, on his outstanding success and commitment to mobilizing the international community towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his dedicated work and leadership of the Organization on behalf of the causes of international peace and security and sustainable development.

I would also like to express our deep condolences on the passing of former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. Annan honoured Africa and the whole world with his devotion to just global causes. The Assembly is also taking place at a time when we are celebrating what would have been the 100th birthday of Nelson Mandela, that icon in the fight for freedom, peace, equality and fraternity. Those two great men should inspire us in our collective fight for a better world of peace, prosperity, security and welfare for our peoples.

Mozambique acknowledges the role of the United Nations in promoting dialogue and defending the principle of the peaceful resolution of the conflicts that continue to affect peoples and nations, violating human rights and hindering sustainable and inclusive development. The United Nations is the mother forum of multilateral dialogue, uniting States' commitments to implementing global agendas and other instruments aimed at enabling us to achieve shared objectives. An unequal and fractured world requires multilateralism to address its gaps. The progress that has been made so far demonstrates unequivocally that the global imperative of sharing responsibilities is an essential element in building a peaceful, just and harmonious world. Examples of that include the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and recent efforts to eliminate nuclear arms and to regulate and humanize migration with a view to averting humanitarian catastrophes. From that list, I should also point to matters relating to human rights and good governance, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and financing for development, among others.

In that regard, Mozambique supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to reform the United Nations system with a view to ensuring that it is fit for purpose. Mozambique also commends his inclusive approach in engaging the States Members of the United Nations at every stage of the process. In addition to those ongoing reforms, accelerating reform of the Security Council is another urgent and important element that will go a long way to reaffirming the relevance of the role of the United Nations in its quest for sustainable solutions to the challenges to peace and security that humankind is facing. The difficulty of reaching consensus among Member States on negotiating these issues also limits the Security Council's capacity to act as one of the Organization's pillars, without which it will be impossible to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda. Those reforms will effectively ensure that the United Nations is relevant to all peoples, which is what we all desire.

With regard to peace and security, Mozambique continues to follow with deep concern the many continuing flashpoints of political instability represented by inter- and intra-State conflicts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. We have closely followed the tensions on the Korean peninsula, as well as the growing problems everywhere of fundamentalism and violent extremism. We hope that the peace initiatives under way at the global level, as well as measures to suppress the recruitment and curb the financing of terrorist groups, will enable us to continue to promote further peaceful development for their peoples.

The right to self-determination of the peoples of Western Sahara and Palestine remains a concern for the international community. The lack of progress on the issue of a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara is a continuing source of concern for all peace-loving peoples. With regard to the Palestinian problem, we believe in a two-State solution, based on two peoples living side by side and on the principles of international law related to good-neighbourliness, peaceful coexistence, dialogue and tolerance. And Mozambique once again joins the majority of States present in this Hall in appealing for the normalization of political, diplomatic, economic and financial relations between Cuba and the United States of America.

Mozambique has also dedicated much effort to removing obstacles to peace, promoting inclusiveness and creating an environment conducive to equitable and sustainable development. Our commitment to a constructive national dialogue has enabled us to make significant progress in resolving differences and building an effective, lasting and sustainable peace, which has gone a long way to creating an environment conducive to strengthening national unity and reconciliation and restoring our economy. After I was sworn in as Head of State in January 2015, I decided to personally commit to the quest for peace. I made that commitment because my country and people were still struggling with tragic conflicts, fomenting wars and punishing the people. Happily, the weapons in my country have been silent for more than two years now, thanks to the direct dialogue I engaged in with the late leader of the Mozambican National Resistance Movement. There is now a consensus on all that we have accomplished in my country, and peace has been

my biggest achievement as President. In July, as a result of our dialogue, Mozambique saw our Assembly enact a bill amending our Constitution and changing our electoral laws, introducing innovative elements to our efforts to decentralize the country with a view to settling post-electoral conflict and strengthening our democracy.

Those concrete steps in the political dialogue are an indelible landmark in our country's multiparty history, as we intend, unlike in previous election cycles, to hold our next general election without any armed political parties. The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is therefore under way for the remaining armed elements of the opposition. As proof that Mozambique is genuinely pro-democracy, on 10 October we will hold municipal elections in 53 municipalities, with the participation of many political parties and civil-society associations. At the end of next year we will hold general elections in line with the agreement by consensus approved by the Assembly of the Republic. Considering the complexity of this issue, both financially and technically, my Government would like to take this solemn opportunity to thank the international community for its support and help, which is not easy to obtain. We still have more work to do to achieve peace, reconciliation and development, and we therefore appeal for more assistance to enable us to ensure the success of the process of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating the remaining armed elements, which will begin soon.

The people of Mozambique are determined to live in peace, and my Government is also committed to fighting the organized crime that is destabilizing and threatening our efforts to achieve national development. We are determined to neutralize the groups of criminals that are trying to disrupt public order and tranquillity in some parts of the northern province of Cabo Delgado. We need everyone to collaborate with us in combating those criminals, because their crimes are global, involving nationals and non-nationals. We cannot think about democracy or human rights when humankind's fundamental right to life is at risk.

Mozambique takes its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals very responsibly, and we therefore aligned our 2015 national agenda with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe firmly that we can create a more just, equitable society with greater solidarity by implementing the Goals. They represent a basis on which we can broaden social justice in our country. My Government has made tremendous efforts to implement our national agenda so as to create more opportunities for our citizens, particularly women and young people, within a framework of ensuring democratic dividends in our society.

Making the United Nations relevant to everyone means leaving no one behind, a hugely important aim that we must not neglect. We should therefore give special attention to policies and strategies aimed at protecting people's full enjoyment of their rights, promoting gender equality and improving capacity-building for women, young people and other vulnerable groups, who make up the majority of our people. Social justice also demands that we promote gender equality, an area where we have had made significant progress at the political, economic and corporate levels.

We have also undertaken efforts to increase access to basic health, education, water and sanitation services for all. Another key element we are working on to solidify the relevance of the United Nations for our people is ensuring their food and nutritional security by prioritizing agriculture in our national development strategy. Since our new governance cycle began in 2015, we have mobilized our domestic resources and encouraged hard work by all, and have increased our agricultural and livestock productivity, with the aim of achieving one of the Sustainable Development Goals, the elimination of hunger by 2030, which will require still more public and private investment.

With regard to combating corruption, another scourge that impedes our ability to achieve our global, regional and national goals, my Government has promoted measures designed to improve every aspect of governance, political, economic and corporate by enacting laws, policies and strategies for fighting corruption. We continue to strengthen our institutional and human capacity to ensure the enforcement of our anti-corruption laws and to raise awareness of this scourge's damaging effects among all members of society and institutions. We must always uphold the principle of the separation of institutional powers.

With regard to climate change, Mozambique, as a country very vulnerable to its effects, has continued to take measures for adaptation and resilience within the framework of the Paris Agreement, which we ratified in June. We have adopted a policy of biodiversity conservation to which 25 per cent of our territory is dedicated. We have also promoted the development of

communities in the conservation area and encouraged their involvement in protecting and preserving our valuable natural resources. We have fostered the use of renewable energies in rural areas, the sustainable management of natural resources, the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, and benefit-sharing. I would like to appeal from this rostrum for international financial and technological cooperation in strengthening our capacity to continue our efforts.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the unconditional commitment of the Government of the Republic of Mozambique to the critical role of the United Nations in finding solutions to the problems afflicting humankind. The United Nations will always be the platform that brings all of us together in a collective commitment to the noble ideas on which this universal Organization was founded — saving future generations from the scourge for war and promoting social progress, better living conditions and greater freedom. Let us continue to be faithful to the supreme ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and work together to build peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8

General debate

Address by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abe (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text provided by the delegation*): I have been accorded the privilege of continuing to serve as Japan's leader for the next three years. As I address the General Assembly today for the sixth consecutive year, I do so with a feeling of renewed resolve.

In the next three years, I will do everything in my power to strengthen the free trade system and to recast the post-war structure of international relations in North-East Asia. In my view, the Japanese people have been very much hoping to see their national leaders serve as flag bearers for free trade, since after the war Japan enjoyed remarkable growth thanks to the advantages of trading as a beneficiary of a free and open economic system. That free trade system enabled the countries of Asia to achieve take-off one after the other and fostered the middle class in all of them, against a backdrop of the large-scale direct investment that Japan has made in those countries since the 1980s. In every case, that was made possible thanks to an international economic system that was rules-based, free and open. If Japan, the country that reaped the greatest benefits of all under that system, should ever fail in its support for maintaining and strengthening that system, who else should we expect to rise in support of it? Japan's responsibility is indeed tremendous.

This is also Japan's mission, rooted in its own history. Other than the coal that supported modern Japan's industrialization, our nation has had no other resources to speak of. But even though post-war Japan lacked resources, when it devoted itself to reaping the blessings of trade, it succeeded in realizing growth that was called miraculous. Japan was the very first country to prove through its own experience the principle of the relationship that exists between trade and growth and that has now become common sense. Japan has now taken on the mission of imparting the benefits of trade to the world.

There have been times when I have risen above intense domestic debates by waving the flag of free trade. There was no greater joy for me than when the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement took final shape and was quickly approved by our National Diet. In addition, Japan and the European Union have signed an economic partnership agreement whose scale and scope are worthy of special mention in history. But that said, we must not be complacent. I will have to push my efforts up a notch and aim still farther ahead.

In addition to Japan's commitment to the World Trade Organization, which is a given, I will make every possible effort to conclude negotiations on a

comprehensive regional economic partnership, which will create an enormous free-trade area in East Asia. And above all, I value our new free, fair and reciprocal trade talks with the United States. Japan and the United States have both advanced the free trade system internationally for many years. That is evidenced by the fact that Japan's direct investment has created employment in the United States for some 856,000 people nationwide — a number second only to what the United Kingdom has achieved. At present, in contrast to the 1.74 million vehicles exported annually from Japan to the United States, the number of Japanese cars manufactured within the United States is 3.77 million. That is a win-win situation at its finest. I intend for Japan and the United States to continue that kind of relationship. But that is hardly unique to our bilateral ties with the United States. Under the flag of free trade, Japan has built up relations with many countries and regions where we can mutually assist one another, and we will continue to do that going forward. In order to expand free and fair economic rules, suitable for the twenty-first century, into the vast region extending from Asia and the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, the countries that have created the system and reaped the greatest benefits from it — that is to say, countries like Japan — must lead the effort. That is what I believe.

At the beginning of my statement, I said that I would do everything in my power to recast the long-standing post-war structure of international relations in North-East Asia. Together with President Vladimir Putin I am now working to end the stalemate between our countries, which has seen no movement for more than 70 years. President Putin and I met at the beginning of this month in Vladivostok for our twenty-second summit meeting, and I will meet with him again in the near future. We must resolve the territorial issue between Japan and Russia and conclude a peace treaty between our two countries. Once a Japanese-Russian peace treaty is signed, peace and prosperity in East Asia will be more secure.

At this time last year in this very Hall, I strongly urged North Korea to tackle its issues relating to abductions, nuclear power and missiles (see A/72/PV.8). As someone who has called for the full implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions, I am extremely interested in the potential for change in North Korea, which is now at a crossroads where it will either seize the historic opportunity it has been afforded or fail to do so. North Korea has both untapped natural resources and a labour force whose productivity can be greatly enhanced. Japan will not change its policy of seeking to resolve our unhappy past history and normalize relations with North Korea once the abduction, nuclear and missile issues are dealt with. We will be unstinting in assisting North Korea to unleash its potential. However, there is one thing I must reiterate over and over again. We will ensure that all Japanese abductees are returned. I am determined to make that a reality, and in order to resolve the issue, I am also ready to break through the wall of mutual distrust between us and North Korea, make a new start and meet with Chairman Kim Jong Un face to face. While so far nothing has been decided regarding a summit meeting between Japan and North Korea, I am determined that if we hold one it must help to resolve the abductions issue.

I also want to comment briefly on relations between Japan and China. The mutual visits at the leadership level that began this year will continue, with me visiting China next month, to be followed by my invitation to President Xi Jinping to Japan, thereby expanding our bilateral relations and improving the stability of the entire region.

When we have recast the current confrontational geopolitical structure in North-East Asia, the maritime corridor from the Arctic Ocean to the Sea of Japan and through the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean will become increasingly important. Japan, which is located right above it and also possesses a vast exclusive economic zone, hopes that we can ensure stability and peace in those waters, as well as in the airspaces above them. The countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations lie at the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and in eras long past it was our forerunners, living in what we now call the Pacific island countries, who crossed those two oceans to introduce products to faraway East Africa. What I call our free and open Indo-Pacific strategy derives from our desire to preserve the blessings of open seas together with those countries, as well as with the United States, Australia, India and others, and indeed all countries and peoples who share those aims. What we must ensure is that the rule of law and a rules-based order control our broad and expansive seas and airspaces, and that they in turn are backed by solid institutions — hence my strategy.

The other day, foreign students in Japan proudly returned to their home countries of Malaysia, the

Philippines and Sri Lanka with new academic degrees in hand, master's degrees in maritime safety and security policy that can be obtained only in Japan. As well as the students that Japan's Coast Guard sends to the programme, it also takes senior officials from various coast-guard authorities in countries all over Asia. The students who graduated the other day were the third cohort to enter the programme. Maritime order is a matter not of power but of the rule of law and a rules-based order. Every year, a class learning that enduring truth and taking it as a guiding principle for their lives will head out from Japan to the seas. That is very promising, and it is Japan's noble mission to cultivate the people who will protect and defend a free and open Indo-Pacific.

As I was preparing this address, I created a new if modest programme. At the beginning of 2019, we will invite approximately 10 elementary and junior-high-school teachers from the Gaza Strip to Japan. That will be the first such group and we will continue to invite teachers every year. Teachers who come to a place such as Japan, so different for them both culturally and historically, will naturally see the situation in Gaza and the Middle East in a wider perspective, and we hope that the experience will enable them to see their own hometowns and region anew and work in a unique way to give them solace. It goes without saying that for peace to be achieved, efforts must be made on both sides. But hopefully this programme of ours will represent some hope for the teachers from Gaza and the children in their care. Twenty years from now, 200 teachers will have had the experience of visiting Japan, and the students taught by them will number in the thousands. I look forward to that day.

The goal of Japanese diplomacy, which to some extent I have conveyed to the Assembly today, is to help to bring certainty to the future of the world and the region. In addition, what I want is for the young people who will live in the Japan of the future to vigorously take on challenges. The duty of our generation is to create an environment conducive to that. It is as if a new breeze is about to blow in Japan.

At the end of April and the beginning of May next year, His Majesty the Emperor will abdicate and His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince will succeed to the throne. In fact, it is the first imperial succession in 200 years to result from a sitting Emperor's abdication, and in October 2019, we will welcome guests of honour from around the world who are coming to express their good wishes. Next June, Japan will host the Group of 20 summit. As Chair of the meeting, I intend to lead the discussions about issues facing the international community, including the state of the global economy and environmental issues. Soon after, in August, Japan will host the seventh meeting of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. The Conference, which Japan has hosted diligently since 1993, has earned the unwavering trust of national leaders all across Africa. At the Conference we will discuss universal health coverage, whose importance I have highlighted a number of times. And lest we forget, next year Japan hosts the Rugby World Cup, and in 2020 Tokyo is hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our eyes will continue to be fixed on the future.

When Japan and the Japanese people fix their gaze squarely on the future, Japan increases in vitality. Japanese citizens focused on the future will become people who are determined to take on the responsibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The next generation of Japanese youth will be commendable flag bearers for the United Nations spirit. I am absolutely certain of that.

In conclusion, I want to say that in the light of the lack of progress in reforming the Security Council, the significance of the United Nations in the twenty-first-century world is already being severely questioned. But that is precisely why Japan will never waver in its contributions to the Organization. I will end by pledging that Japan, alongside Secretary-General Guterres, will push forward with reform of both the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia.

Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime

Minister of the Republic of Armenia, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Pashinyan (Armenia): First of all, I would like to congratulate Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. We hope that the deliberations under her able leadership will be fruitful.

It is a great honour to address the Assembly as a leader who has recently become the Prime Minister of Armenia as the result of a people's revolution that is now known as Armenia's velvet revolution. I would like to take a moment to share the story of our victory over the authoritarian rule that preceded that revolution. The people of Armenia succeeded in bringing about an unforeseen and unprecedented revolution, which took place without violence, victims or public disorder. That was no coincidence, as our intention was to make a revolution based on love and solidarity. From the very beginning, we declared that we were ruling out violence of any kind. We declared that even if violence was used against us, we would not respond with violence. We declared that our response would be with raised and open hands, smiles and love.

When we started this political process there were just a few dozens of us marching from Gyumri, Armenia's second-largest city, to the capital, Yerevan. When we reached Yerevan and showed our determination and devotion to the principle of non-violence, our entire nation rose up against the ruling regime in unity and solidarity. We won without a single shot being fired and with no victims, through peaceful demonstrations alone. We succeeded against all expectations. Even well-known experts and think tanks were sceptical about our chances for victory. Against all odds, I was elected Prime Minister, and in a Parliament where I had only four reliable votes, including my own. Yet it was possible. It happened because people were firm in their demands, and the Parliament, which had been elected just a year before, had no choice but to follow the people's will.

While that Parliament continues to operate today, it no longer represents the people's will, as it also failed to do before and during the revolution. Why? The short answer is that the elections that created it involved the buying of votes on a massive scale, the misuse of administrative resources, and oppression.

An important test of our ability to hold genuine free, fair and competitive elections was the Yerevan city council election that took place just before my departure for New York. The fact that for the first time since Armenia became independent, all of the main parties congratulated the winning candidate and nobody questioned the official results shows that a completely new political culture has been established in Armenia. In the same spirit, we are now getting ready for snap parliamentary elections in our country. Free, fair and transparent elections will become an irreversible reality in Armenia and will bring strong and vibrant democratic institutions that function through a system of checks and balances. Protecting our citizens' rights and ensuring freedom of speech and other forms of expression and of assembly are very high on our Government's agenda. From now on, there can be no possibility of manipulating the electoral process and undermining the people's trust.

I would also like to stress that the current situation in Armenia is not just a change of Government or ruling party. It represents the establishment of a new political and governance system, which we have named "the people's direct rule" or "the people's direct governance". In order to institutionalize the system, we intend to guarantee the expression of the people's will not only through elections but also through local and national referendums, in order to engage our people in the decision-making process.

Having been a political prisoner myself, I understand how much it means to be able to speak out and decide one's own future. Now that we have assumed our responsibilities, our team has a clear vision and the strong political will we need to launch fundamental reforms aimed at eradicating corruption, creating transparent, accountable and efficient governance mechanisms, safeguarding human rights and the rule of law, ensuring an independent judiciary and advancing economic growth through a free and competitive business environment and an atmosphere favourable to investment.

Despite the radical transformation in our internal political life, our foreign policy agenda will not involve any U-turns. The continuity of Armenia's foreign policy shows that our country is a predictable and reliable partner. Our international commitments are not subject to revision. Our position is clear: Armenia stands ready to have constructive dialogue and to cooperate with

all partners. However, we do not intend to develop our relations with one partner at the expense of another.

We underline the importance of the role of multilateralism at the global and regional level. Armenia's cooperation under the umbrella of the United Nations is comprehensive and vibrant. Without going into minute detail, I would like to mention our contributions to global peace through the United Nations-led and -supported peace operations, with their impressive geographical scope, which extends from Afghanistan to Lebanon and from Kosovo to Mali. That has special significance for our country. While we are dealing with serious security concerns, we realize that the security of any one country is inextricably linked to that of all others and that global peace requires concerted action.

We are a truly global nation, with hundreds of Armenian communities all around the world, which explains Armenia's sensitivity to global threats that could put our fellow Armenians at risk in different parts of the world. The sizeable Armenian community in Syria is facing an existential threat from the ongoing crisis there. Armenia has tried to contribute by dispatching humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable regions, and we are ready to enhance our humanitarian mission, aimed at meeting the most pressing needs of our community in Syria. As a nation that has experienced the horrors of genocide, Armenians have a greai awareness of security concerns involving their compatriots and are ready to do their utmost to protect them.

The peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict continues to occupy a central place on our foreign policy agenda. The status and security of the Republic of Artsakh is an absolute priority for Armenia in the negotiation process. Any attempt to resolve the conflict through military means represents a direct threat to regional security, democracy and human rights. Armenia will continue its constructive engagement in the peaceful resolution of the conflict within the format of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has the only internationally recognized mandate to deal with the conflict.

Azerbaijan should change its disrespectful attitude to the negotiations, abandon the idea of any military solution and implement all previous agreements. Furthermore, if Azerbaijan is truly committed to the peace process, it should start talking to the main subject of the conflict, Nagorno Karabakh. Azerbaijan declares at every possible occasion that Karabakh should be a part of its territory, while at the same time announcing that it will not negotiate with Nagorno Karabakh. The question is how Azerbaijan can make a claim to Nagorno Karabakh without even speaking to it. Is that possible? It is possible only if the Azerbaijani Government wants the territory, but not the people in it. It therefore becomes obvious that the Azerbaijani leadership's intention is to cleanse Armenians from Karabakh, as it did in Nakhchivan. That entitles Nagorno Karabakh to argue that if Karabakh were to become a part of Azerbaijan it would mean its total extermination. Karabakh must therefore not become a part of Azerbaijan unless we want to trigger a new Armenian genocide.

To sum up, let me reiterate that the conflict can and should be settled only through mutual compromise on all sides, in an atmosphere conducive to peace, not war. Last but not least, I would also like to express my satisfaction to the Secretary-General for his unwavering support to the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs' approach and the related efforts.

The topic of our deliberations, "Making the United Nations relevant to all people: global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies", shows the consistent nature of our approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations and its development agenda should indeed be relevant and accessible to all. No one should be left behind, as we keep repeating in our collective efforts. Earlier this year, in July, Armenia presented its first voluntary national report on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. That important exercise coincided with a decisive political period animated by vibrant democratic processes and the launch of a wide range of reforms in my country. Armenia is committed to the creation and development of a knowledge-based, innovative platform that will leverage the impact and accelerate the implementation of the development agenda.

In that regard, we recognize the indispensable role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, as well as the importance of cooperation in working with other potential partners. As a newly elected member of the Economic and Social Council and a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the 2020-2022

term, Armenia will do its utmost to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This is the year when we mark the seventieth anniversary of two of our most important human rights documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Each has its own history, and each has become a cornerstone for the development of international law. They served as the basis on which Armenia launched the Global Forum against the Crime of Genocide. This year the Global Forum will be dedicated to issues of genocide prevention through education, culture and museums. I encourage delegations to come and contribute to the work of the Forum.

(*spoke in French*)

"Living together" is the theme of the seventeenth summit of the International Organization of la Francophonie, which will be held in October in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, a city that is some 2,800 years old. It is a great honour and a privilege for Armenia to be part of the wider French-speaking family and to promote tolerance and mutual respect through cooperation in the areas of culture, education and innovation. I reiterate once again our invitation to delegations to attend the summit of La Francophonie with several events planned within that framework.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. M. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco

Mr. M. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. M. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. El Othmani (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure of congratulating Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés on her election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session. I wish her every success in her noble task.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the tireless efforts of Secretary-General António Guterres in reforming our Organization, strengthening its role and achieving its noble objectives. I reiterate Morocco's full support for his initiatives, especially in the areas of peacekeeping, peacebuilding, modernizing the working mechanisms of the Organization and achieving sustainable development.

The world is facing various challenges and resulting transformations that require us to adopt innovative approaches in order to advance multilateralism, which is suffering a real crisis. We therefore need to define consensus concepts in addressing global issues and making international organizations effective and able to adapt to continuing transformation. Addressing and debating this reality is not merely an intellectual act but an explicit call to think realistically and objectively about the outcomes of the United Nations work with the aim of promoting its capabilities and realizing its goals.

In this context, Morocco, through the vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, believes that the development of multilateral action requires particular attention to the three pillars of security, development and human rights. The year 2018 has furthered the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015. It is also a year in which we recall two historic events in our collective undertaking that established the identity of the United Nations, devoted to shared, universal human values and entrenched international peace and security.

The first historic event took place 70 years ago, when the United Nations deployed its first peacekeeping mission. That leads us to recall the fundamental role that the Organization plays in peacekeeping, based on the peaceful resolution of international and regional disputes, respect for the sovereignty of States and their territorial integrity and independence. At the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, His Majesty King Mohamed VI, through Prince Moulay Rachid, underscored from this rostrum that

> "[a]chieving international peace and security remains the core historic mission entrusted to the United Nations. The tens of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers serving throughout the world to protect civilians and working to bring about the

right conditions for political dialogue between the concerned parties clearly attest to the vital role played by our Organization in that regard." (*A/67/PV.16, p. 10*).

In his letter addressed to the Secretary-General early this month, His Majesty also underlined the appreciation of the Kingdom of Morocco for his initiative to organize a high-level meeting during this session on developing the work of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Morocco fully supports the final communiqué of the meeting.

The second historic event is the adoption on 10 December 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the seventieth anniversary of which we will celebrate this year. The Declaration laid the first foundation stone for universal human rights, leading to established joint universal values in the area of human rights. It also served as an incentive to adopt other international conventions on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In that regard, Morocco underscores its commitment to human rights as internationally recognized. We call once again for the noble principles of human rights to be elements of convergence among nations, without any biased politicization.

Multilateral work that is based on balance, realism, effectiveness, openness and ambition is among the priorities of the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Morocco, as established by King Mohammed. Now more than ever we need to work together to identify consensus approaches based on humanity and solidarity in order to address shared challenges, particularly with respect to climate change, the fight against terrorism, and migration. It is in this spirit that His Majesty has launched an effort to mobilize the world to limit the impact of climate change. He made the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Morocco a historical event for implementing the commitments undertaken at the Paris Climate Change Conference.

In the same spirit, Morocco has contributed with resolve and firmness to international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and cross-border security threats. Given our recognized experience, we have contributed to developing international, regional and national approaches in that regard. The Kingdom of Morocco has continued its contribution to mobilize international efforts to combat terrorism, including through its joint presidency, together with the Netherlands, of the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

On the subject of migration, King Mohammed, as a pioneer in migration policies within the African Union, presented the African Agenda on Migration, which was adopted in Addis Ababa at the thirty-first summit of the African Union, in January 2018. At the international level, Morocco, together with Germany, co-chairs the Global Forum on Migration. The outcomes of these international and African events have helped to strengthen the preparations for the global compact for migration.

In the past few months, and for the first time in history, negotiations have resulted in an international consensus on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, which will be adopted at a high-level meeting scheduled to take place in Marrakech, in Morocco, on 10 and 11 December. That meeting will be a historically transformative moment in dealing with migration. It will establish a new global order based on dialogue, consultation and cooperation, while positively addressing migration as a fundamental human dynamic in the development of societies, bringing civilizations closer together and achieving development. Everyone is, of course, welcome in Marrakech.

Given our firmly anchored African identity and our close historic and human ties with the African countries, Morocco has made its relations with the African continent one of the top priorities of its foreign policy, within a framework of integrated and proactive strategic vision. Morocco is proud of its African nature and of its distinctive relations with its African brothers. King Mohammed is eager to propose African solutions to every African problem on the international agenda in order to support African and international efforts to attain peace, development and good governance.

Morocco supports all initiatives to achieve prosperity and stability on the African continent, which is why we are honoured to co-chair the Sustainability, Security and Stability initiative with Senegal, seeking to combat desertification in Africa by reclaiming arid lands and providing stability for their inhabitants, enabling them and their families to live a decent life. I would like to take this opportunity to call on the States Members of the United Nations to actively participate in the success of this important event related to Africa and its development.

Morocco is a member of the African Peace and Security Council and intends to shoulder its responsibility for mobilizing every effort to preserve security and peace while promoting stability on the African continent, in support of United Nations efforts in this area.

The dangers facing the Middle East demand that we come up with a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian question, which is at the heart of the conflicts in the region, along with its security and stability. The Kingdom of Morocco calls on the United Nations to focus its efforts on relaunching the political process on a basis of the relevant international and bilateral terms of reference so that the Palestinian people can enjoy their legitimate rights, particularly the creation of an independent State across the entire Palestinian national territory, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Kingdom of Morocco is aware of the importance of Jerusalem to the three monotheistic religions and the whole world. I emphasize that Morocco rejects any change to the historic, legal and political status of the city of Jerusalem, in the light of the fact that King Mohammed presides over the Al-Quds Committee. We call for international efforts to maintain its status and protect it against any action targeting it.

Another source of concern in the Middle East and North Africa is the interference of certain regional Powers in the internal affairs of some Arab countries, including the Kingdom of Morocco, which undermines their security and stability and threatens their sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity. Morocco wants to take this opportunity to reaffirm its rejection and condemnation of such aggressive and destructive attitudes. We call on those Powers to refrain from this approach, which runs counter to international law, international relations and the principle of good-neighbourliness. We call on them to adopt informed options and to sincerely and courageously participate in establishing a safe, stable and welcoming region.

The contrived regional dispute over Western Sahara remains a principal source of instability in the region and an obstacle to joint action and the integration of the Maghreb. That is why it is essential to work diligently to find a lasting political solution through efforts in which Algeria, if it is serious, should be effectively and directly involved, given its historical and political responsibility for creating, fuelling and prolonging the dispute.

The Kingdom of Morocco underlines its full commitment to the terms of reference adopted by the Security Council to address this contrived dispute. The Council is the only international body mandated to address the political aspect of the dispute, by adopting a spirit of realism and consensus and working to reach a realistic, practical and lasting solution, as provided for in the Council's resolutions, particularly resolution 2414 (2018). In that regard, Morocco underscores its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, aimed at achieving a final and agreed political solution to this dispute, based on the position expressed by King Mohammed in his address on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution of the King and the People, on 20 August. His Majesty stressed that Morocco will continue to

> "engage with full trust and commitment in the dynamic work generated by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, based on the same terms of reference that we identified in the last Green March address. We note with satisfaction the growing harmony between these principles and the international positions".

In parallel, Morocco continues to make every effort to promote the development model in the southern Sahara. We support an advanced, decentralized system that would enable the inhabitants of the Moroccan Sahara to manage their own affairs in an environment of democracy, stability and sustainable development.

It is with deep regret that we recall the disastrous situation in which our detained brothers are living in the camps at Tindouf. We reiterate our firm and non-negotiable demand for the international community to compel Algeria to assume all its political, legal and humanitarian responsibilities as the host country. It should allow the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to carry out its mandate by conducting a census of those people, on the basis of Security Council resolutions and in response to the numerous appeals made by the Secretary General and various humanitarian bodies over the years.

We firmly believe that the major changes and transformations in our world today require urgent, strong and concerted efforts on the part of all members of the international community, whoever they are and regardless of their interests. Multilateralism is contrary to isolation and to perpetuating the status quo. It is a symbol of progress, understanding and adaptation. The

multilateral system, despite the criticism it faces, will remain essential to addressing the challenges and issues facing the international community.

The Kingdom of Morocco will continue to be an active and responsible Member of the United Nations and the international community. The Kingdom of Morocco will continue to believe in the principles of the Organization, in which we have confidence, thanks to its multilateral work.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for the statement he has just made.

Mr. M. Saad-Eddine El Othmani, Head of Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 9.10 p.m.